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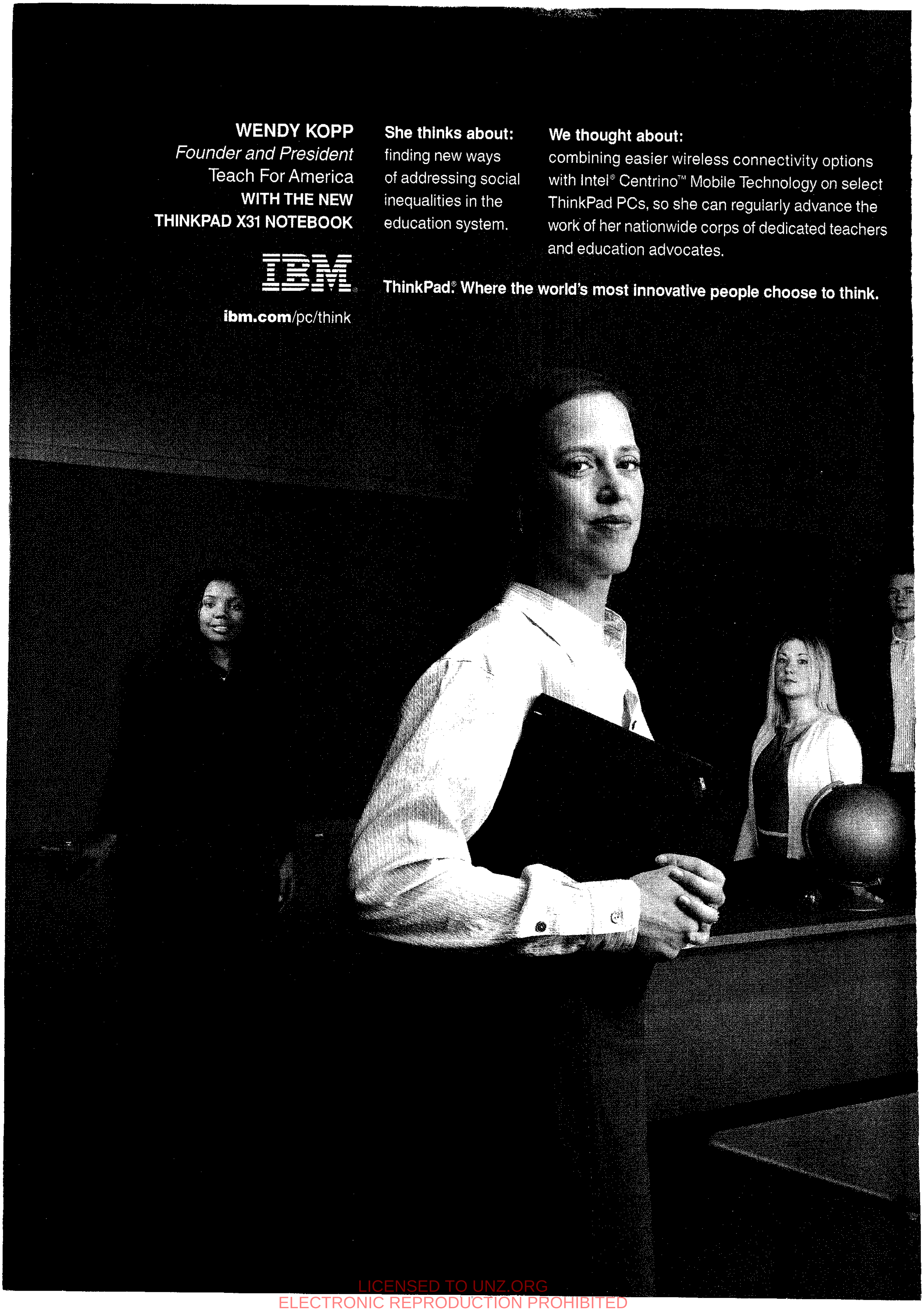

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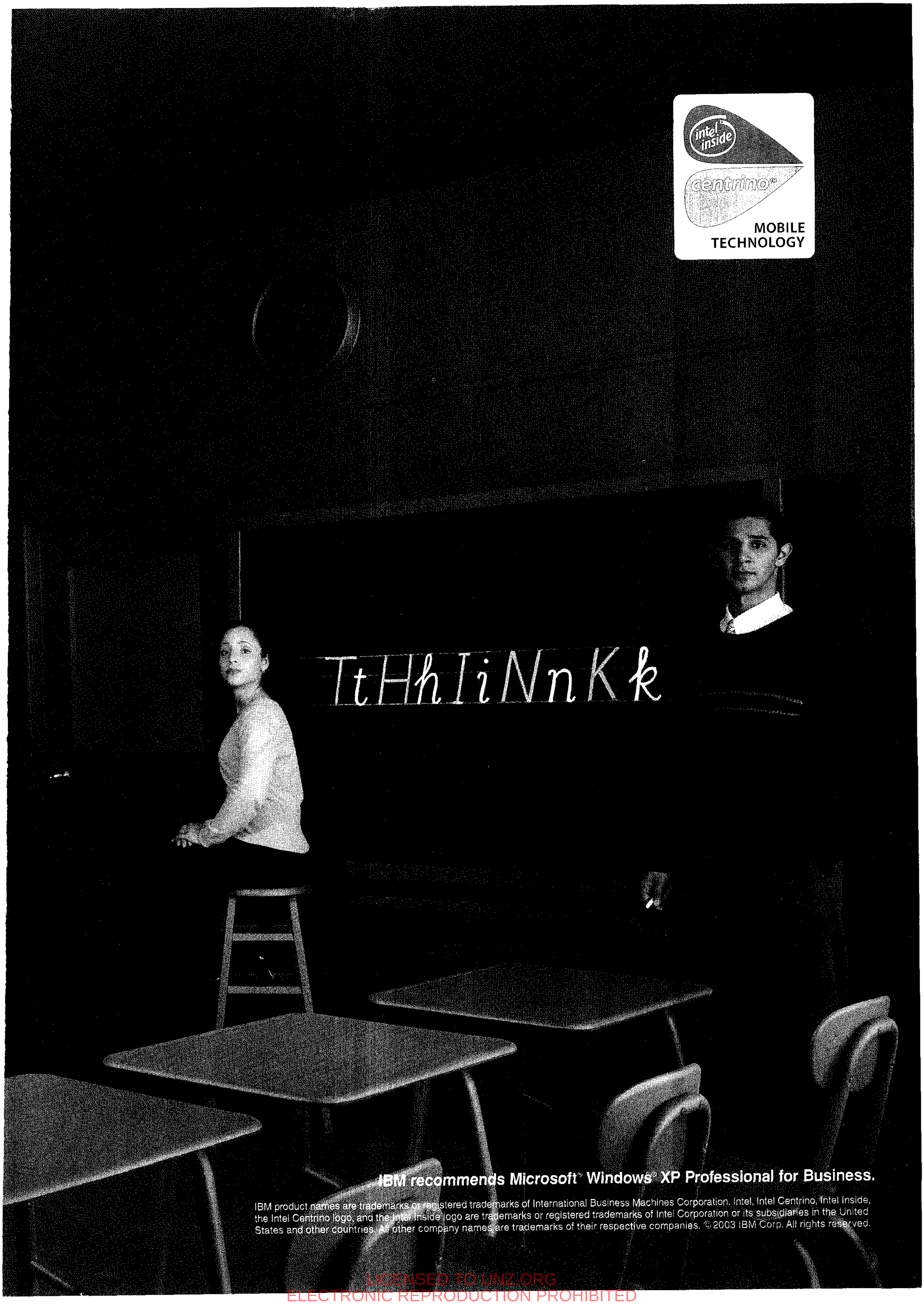

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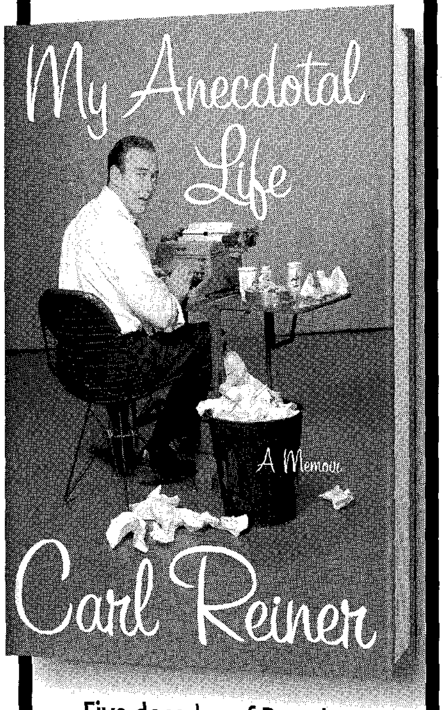

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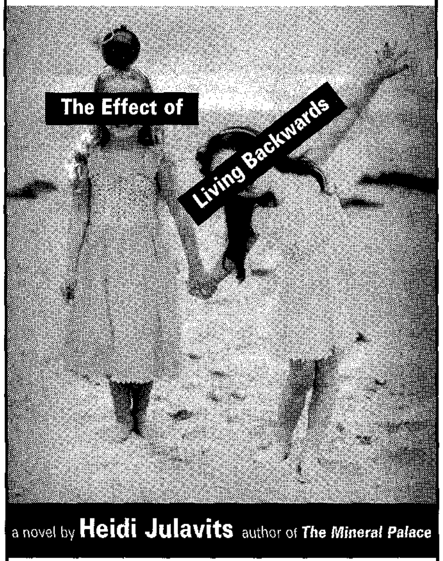

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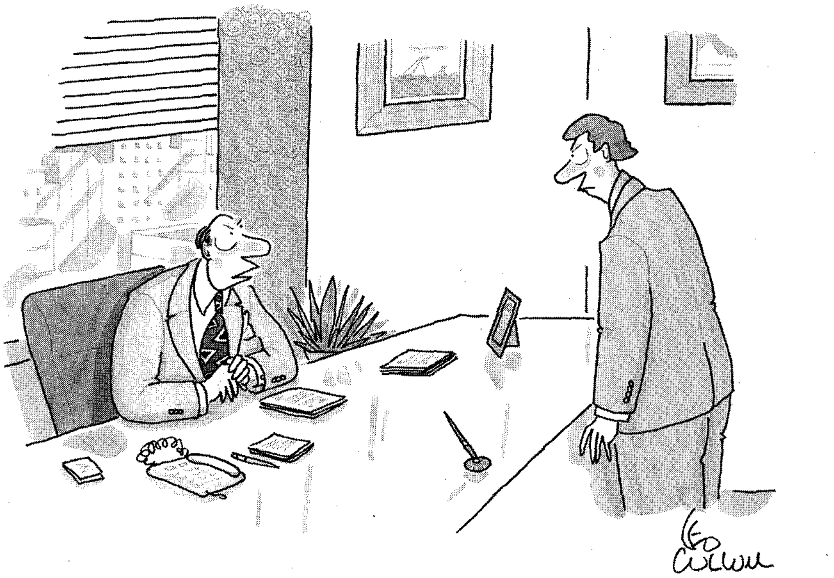

"I don't have to be a team player, Crawford. I'm the team owner."

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THE PATENT EXPRESS

James Surowiecki writes that the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals 1998 State Street decision "did away with" the principle that "a business method was considered to be an idea . . . and ideas of this sort were not patentable" (The Talk of the Town, July 14th & 21st). In fact, such processes or methods have always been patentable—State Street involved a challenge to a patent, after all—though not always unequivocally so. Over the years, courts and the Patent and Trademark Office have certainly made noises about not liking business-method patents. But, whenever they have actually thrown one out, the reason has been a prosaic one: the invention wasn't new. An example is Fowler v. City of New York, decided by the Second Circuit in 1903. The patent, which the suit claimed the city's subways would infringe, was for a "bitransit system"—one with express and local trains. It described how two trains heading the same way would enter a station across "island" platforms, and how stairways could be efficiently placed. The city couldn't show that such a four-track system existed before the patent, although there were two-track systems. The city won—not because the patent was for a business method but because the extrapolation to four tracks was held to be obvious, and in patent law what is obvious from "prior art" is not new. It's often said that ideas can't be patented. That's not quite right. What can't be patented is ideas that are already out there, or (thanks to a requirement in patent law called "enablement") that the inventor has no clue how to make work.

Roberta J. Morris
Adjunct Professor of Patent Law
University of Michigan Law School
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Surowiecki is quite right to point out the recent excesses of the patent system. But the problem itself is not new. The Supreme Court, in its 1882 Atlantic Works decision, found, "It was never the object of those laws to grant a monopoly for every trifling device, every shadow of a shade of an idea. . . . Such an indiscriminate creation of exclusive privileges tends rather to obstruct than to stimulate invention. It creates a class of speculative schemers who make it their business to watch the advancing wave of improvement and gather its foam in the form of patented monopolies, which enable them to lay a heavy tax upon the industry of the country."

William O. Moeser
Springfield, Vt.

PUSHKIN ON A PEDESTAL

Ian Frazier, in his article on St. Petersburg's three-hundredth anniversary, mentions a sentence that was "enclosed in quotation marks, but had no attribution" on one of the tricentennial celebration banners: "Flaunt your beauty, city of Peter, and stand steadfast, like Russia" ("Invented City," July 28th). These lines need no attribution in Russia—they are from Pushkin's "Bronze Horseman," and most Russians know them by heart.

Valentin Lyubarsky
Brooklyn, N.Y.

WHEN HENRY MET RICHARD

John Lahr's review of Shakespeare's "Henry V" cites Henry's reference to "the fault / My father made in compassing the crown," which Lahr identifies as the "overthrow and subsequent murder of Richard III" (The Theatre, July 28th). But Henry's father, the former Lord Bolingbroke, deposed Richard II. Richard III lost his crown and his life in 1485 at Bosworth Field, the battle that made the Earl of Richmond Henry VII. "Henry V" completes the cycle of plays that begins with "Richard II"; "Richard III" completes the cycle that begins with "Henry VI, Part I."

Kenneth Franklin Kurz
Burbank, Calif.

•

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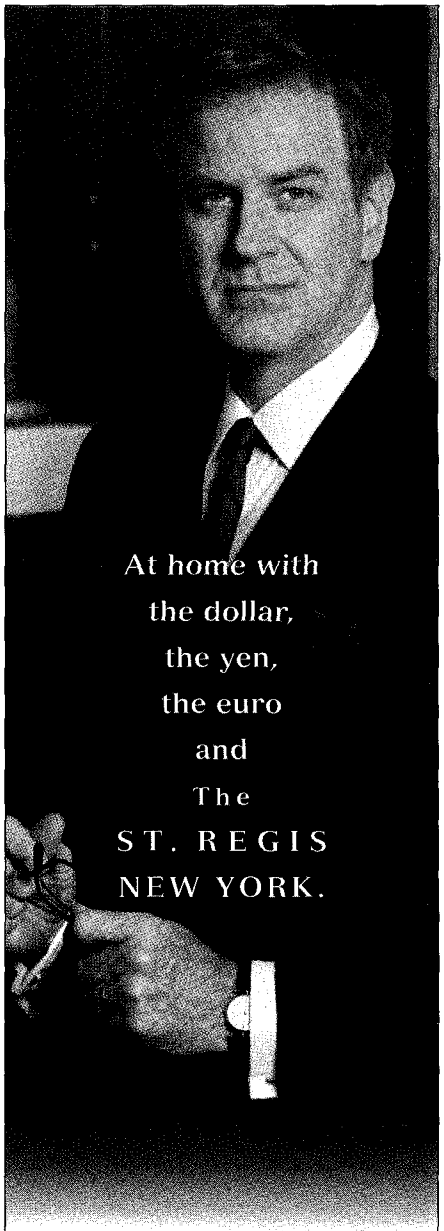

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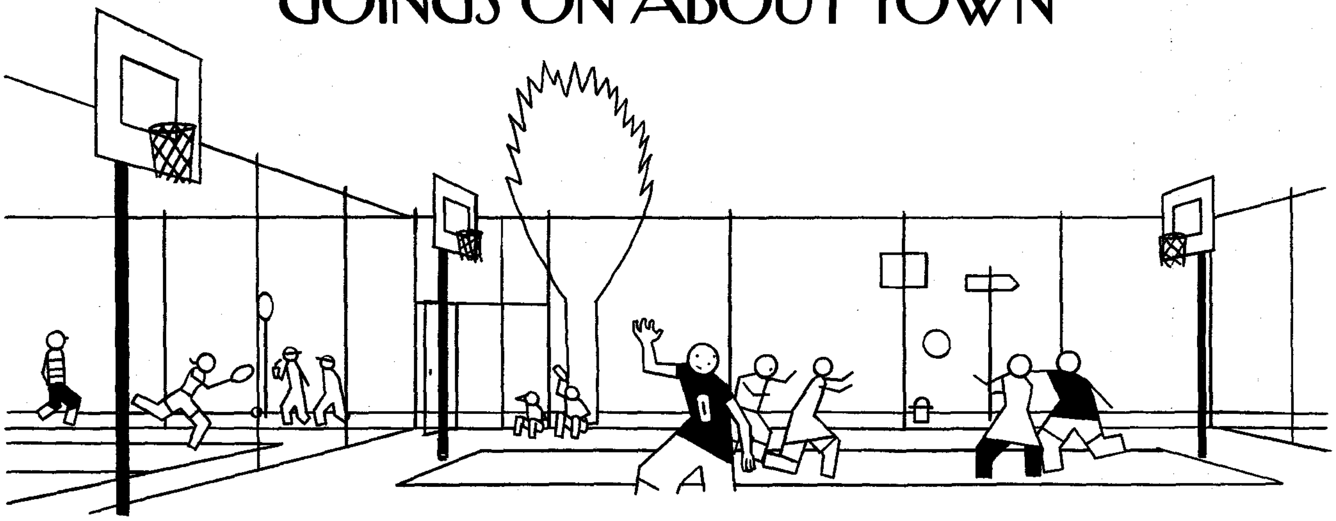

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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			6	7	8	9
10	11	12				

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

CARNIVAL KNOWLEDGE
The Coney Island impresario Todd Robbins brings a motley crew of sideshow icons to the SoHo Playhouse for an open-ended series of performances by the Human Blockhead, Twistina the Rubber Lady, the dwarf king Little Jimmy, the Flying Ebola Brothers, and other freaks and geeks. In previews. (15 Vandam St. 212-239-6200.)

LOST
A new musical based on the Hansel and Gretel story runs for all three weeks of the 2003 Fringe Festival. Book and lyrics by Kirk Wood Bromley and music by the late Jessica Grace Wing. Directed by Rob Urbinati. Opens Aug. 9 at 12. (Linhart Theatre, 440 Lafayette St. 212-420-8877.)

THE LOVE-HUNGRY FARMER
John B. Keane's play about a shy farmer returns to the Irish Repertory Theatre. Directed by Charlotte Moore. Previews begin Aug. 5. Opens Aug. 7 at 8. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

MATT & BEN
That's Damon and Affleck, should you need to be told. Brenda Withers and Mindy Kaling's comedy from the 2002 Fringe Festival—in which the two women play the two actors in their pre-supernova phase—gets an Off Broadway run at P.S. 122. Directed by David Warren. In previews. Opens Aug. 7 at 8. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.)

MISS JULIE
Strindberg's play about an uptown girl who has an affair with her father's valet is presented by Blush Productions in a new adaptation by Julie Saad. Directed by Daniel Cohen. Opens Aug. 7 at 8. (Common Basis Theatre, 750 Eighth Ave., between 46th and 47th Sts. 212-868-4444.)

MR. GALLICO
A New York con man distresses the locals, in a musical by Sam Carter that is set at the end of the nineteenth century and aims to mingle the sound of Tom Waits with Kurt Weill's macabre style. Directed by Henry Caplan. Opens Aug. 8 at 7. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-447-8423.)

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL
Two hundred and seven plays burn through twenty stages over seventeen days during the seventh annual celebration of downtown theatre. Some of the highlights are the dark comedy "How to Act Around Cops"; "Poseidon! An Upside-Down Musical" (a parody of the 1972 film with Ernest Borgnine and Shelley Winters); "Trapped," Ksenia Vidyaykina's unearthly one-woman dance-theatre show with singing; "Dear Charlotte," Joy Gregory's play about Charlotte Brontë; and "The Rats Are Getting Bigger," a creepy, in-your-face musical. The festival runs Aug. 8-24. (Call 212-279-4488 or see www.fringenyc.org.)

WESTERN UNIDAD
A road musical set in the southern-Texas borderlands during the gas crisis of 1973 has a pop, punk, and funk score. Opens Aug. 6 at 7, as part of the Ice Factory 2003 theatre festival, which runs through Aug. 16. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 212-966-2844. For full festival schedule, call the box office.)

THE WOOD DEMON
Chekhov's play gets a new translation by Carol Rocamora in the Desert Apple Theatre Company production, directed by Cynthia Dillon. Previews begin Aug. 7. Opens Aug. 8 at 8. (Chernuchin Theatre, American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AVENUE Q
The joyful and jaundiced hit musical—a teasing update of "Sesame Street" for adults—comes to Broadway. Directed by Jason Moore. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BIG RIVER
In this lively, ingeniously staged production, which features deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing actors, the American Sign Language adaptation of the classic musical gets its New York début. Mark Twain's tale of Huckleberry Finn's journey down the Mississippi may be the most honest and moving story about race and fraternity that this country has ever produced. In this stage evocation of it, which has a witty book by William Hauptman and a rousing score and lyrics by Roger Miller, the big musical numbers don't detract from the subtlety of Twain's exposition; instead, the songs and performances boost Twain's vibrant language and wild leaps of humor. As Huck Finn, Tyrone Giordano (who is deaf) excellently conveys Huck's emotions and thoughts without speaking a line, aided by his expressive, Chaplinesque face. As he performs, the gifted Daniel Jenkins accompanies him, speaking Huck's lines. Jenkins also perfectly delivers Mark Twain, bending his voice to put across both the writer's natural ebullience and his caustic wit. Michael McElroy, as Jim, the escaped slave whom Huck befriends, has a baritone that rocks the rafters and shows a strength of character that enriches their friendship. A co-production of the Deaf West and Roundabout theatre companies. Directed by Jeff Calhoun. (American Airlines, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

THE CAPITOL STEPS
The satirical Washington, D.C.-based musical group brings its newest show, "Between Iraq and a Hard Place," to the John Houseman Theatre. (450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

EDGE
Angelica Torn is Sylvia Plath in a new play about the poet, set on the last day of her life. Written and directed by Paul Alexander. (Reviewed in this issue.) (DR2 Theatre, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

FLESH AND BLOOD
This scintillating family saga, adapted by Peter Gaitens from Michael Cunningham's 1995 novel, spans three generations, beginning its elegiac trajectory in 1949, when an eager, provincial sixteen-year-old named Mary (the superb Cherry Jones) marries a burly Greek immigrant, Constantine Stassos (expertly played by John Sierros). The plotlines are deftly crosshatched by Gaitens's bold narrative construction, and Doug Hughes' poised direction keeps the pace and the poignancy clear. (Reviewed in our issue of 7/28/03.) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

HENRY V
The prodigal prince, having ascended the throne, has been born again as a soldier king. For this exemplar of elusive charm and steely willfulness, a man whose heroic presence is somehow shrouded in solitude, Liev Schreiber is heaven-sent casting. At once compelling and unreachable, he has a swiftness of mind that convinces the audience that language is being coined in the moment. His speech, unlike that of the merely adequate supporting cast, feels lived rather than learned. With the kittenish Nicole Leach as Princess Katherine of France and lively, if uneven, direction by Mark Wing-Davey. (7/28/03) (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750. Closes Aug. 10.)

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT
In a stately and compelling production at the Plymouth, Eugene O'Neill's masterpiece has been superbly revived, bringing O'Neill's own spectral, heartbroken family—"the four haunted Tyrones," he called them—to the stage. Vanessa Redgrave and Brian Dennehy play Mary and James Tyrone, and Philip Seymour Hoffman and Robert Sean Leonard are their sons, Jamie and Edmund. Redgrave, lyrical and feral, moves like a trapped animal in a cage of her own choosing. And Hoffman's toxic sorrow in his fight with his brother kicks the

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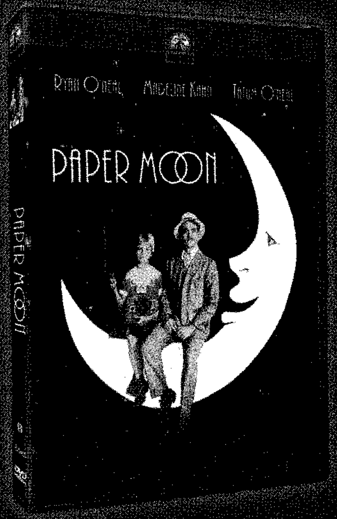
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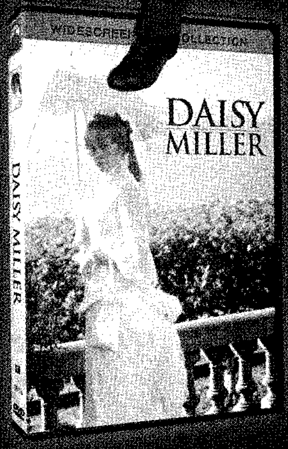
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play onto a completely new emotional level. Directed by Robert Falls. (5/19/03) (236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Closes Aug. 31.)

NINE
In this elegant revival of Arthur Kopit and Maury Yeston's 1982 musical—an adaptation of Fellini's "8½"—Antonio Banderas plays Guido Contini, a film director whose genius is inextricable from his childlike narcissism. Good-looking, confident, and amusing, Banderas has a European restraint that only magnifies his passionate nature. He also has a fine voice. The other characters are satellites around Planet Guido: his put-upon wife (Mary Stuart Masterson), his battle-axe producer (Chita Rivera), and his tenacious and lubricious mistress, Carla (Jane Krakowski), who descends semi-nude from the rafters. Directed by David Leveaux. (4/21 & 28/03) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS
Julia Jordan's mood-perfect adaptation of Betsy Byars's book about a thirteen-year-old girl who struggles with adolescent awkwardness, a too-pretty older sister, and a disabled, mute brother is one of the most grownup plays in town. On a marvellously expressive set by James Wolk, ceiling-height *Seventeen*-magazine covers from the seventies form a backdrop that unfolds into a suburban lawn, a TV room, or a sun-dappled wood, where Sara (Kate Wetherhead) stews at the unfairness of life, cossets and chivvies her brother, watches swans take flight, and almost has her first kiss. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. Tickets are free, and are first come, first served. For information, call 212-642-6754. Closes Aug. 20.)

OUT OF TOWN

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
"Antony and Cleopatra" plays at Boscobel Restoration. Directed by David Muse. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575. Closes Aug. 31.)

KING LEAR
Jonathan Epstein plays the title role in the Shakespeare & Company production of the tragedy in the Berkshires, which runs in repertory with "Much Ado About Nothing" and "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)." (Founders' Theatre, Lenox, Mass. For information, call 413-637-3353 or see www.shakespeare.org. Closes Aug. 30.)

TAMING OF THE SHREW: EXTREME
This is better theatre than you'd expect to find on a hill by a footbridge in a park at the easternmost tip of Long Island—silly but savvy, and just the thing to accompany a sunset picnic. The mischievous creators have mimicked the construction of "Kiss Me, Kate," alternating layers of Shakespeare's romp with a modern-day battle of the sexes (Kate and Petruchio square off in Everlast boxing gloves) patterned after "Survivor," with challenges, buzzers, a scoreboard, and faux-earnest testimonials. Adam Arian, who was terrific in "Bomb-itty of Errors" a couple of years back, shines as Lucentio, a Pisan student who loves Kate's bland younger sister, Bianca. Bianca, in a hilarious twist, is played by a blow-up doll and is whisked about to highly comic effect by Barbra Wengerd, who also plays Lucentio's servant, Tranio. As night falls, junebugs and actors zoom madly across the stage and its grassy perimeter, giddy with purposeful energy. Directed by Craig George. (Theodore Roosevelt County Park, Route 27, three miles east of Montauk. For information, call 631-267-0105 or see www.hamptons-shakespeare.org. Closes Aug. 15.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 212-254-4370.

POP NOTES

WILD KINGDOM
The best American pop band on the current scene is Welsh. Super Furry Animals, a five-piece from Cardiff that just released their sixth album, **"Phantom Power"** (XL), became British media darlings in the late nineties with a series of kaleidoscopic records that demonstrated a mastery of everything from dance music to fuzzed-out guitar rock. In recent years, though, the band, led by the singer and guitarist Gruff Rhys, has settled into a style that draws on the expansive pop of nineteen-sixties California: the country inflections and ethereal harmonies of the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, and especially the Beach Boys (on the epic "Rings Around the World," in 2001, they employed Paul McCartney to chomp celery as percussion, reprising his role on the Beach Boys' 1967 oddity "Vegetables"). The album opens with "Hello Sunshine," an indelibly melodic ballad, and maintains the same hypnotic hold throughout; while it doesn't have the manic energy of earlier records, such as "Radiator" or the all-Welsh "Mwng," it has endless reserves of warmth, sophistication, and Rhys's sly political wit: "Rings Around the World" contained a song about Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, and "Phantom Power" is filled with references to the oil economy and America's bellicosity.

Back in 1996, the same year that Super Furry Animals released their début, "Fuzzy Logic," a New Jersey rock foursome named the Wrens released their second album, "Secaucus." Though label problems left the record in limbo, it was hailed by the diskerati as the decade's great lost masterpiece. Seven years later, the Wrens, still together, have delivered **"The Meadowlands"** (Absolutely Kosher) to the faithful, but not only to the faithful—this time it's clear that the band means to make a bigger splash. Though moody guitar rock remains the dominant style, the harmonies are smoother, the production is sturdier (albeit less surprising), and the lyrics, especially on songs such as "This Boy Is Exhausted," "Boys, You Won't," and "Ex-Girl Collection," are as determined as ever to paint wistful miniatures of loves lost and found.

—*Ben Greenman*

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CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 212-239-6200.

DREAM A LITTLE DREAM
Village, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100. (Closes Aug. 31.)

ENCHANTED APRIL
Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Aug. 31.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

GYPSY
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

KIKI AND HERB: COUP DE THÉÂTRE
Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St., between Bedford and Hudson Sts. 212-239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MAN OF LA MANCHA
Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Aug. 31.)

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-921-8000.

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Aug. 24.)

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 212-477-2477.

TAKE ME OUT
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.

TALKING HEADS
Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 212-307-1400.

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP
The choreographer returns to the Mostly Mozart Festival for the second time with a quartet of music-visualization pieces, including one of his first, "Gloria," set to Vivaldi's "Gloria in D" (1981, revised in 1984); "Bedtime" (1992), set to Schubert's touching "Wiegenlied" and to "Ständchen" and "Erlkönig"; "A Spell" (1993), set to seventeenth-century pastoral lute songs by John Wilson; and "V" (2001), set to Schumann's Quintet in E for Piano and Strings. The soprano Christine Brandes, the mezzo-soprano Kristine Jepson, and the Dessoff Choirs accompany the dance. (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500. Aug. 6-8 at 8.)

TWYLA THARP DANCE
The company's season at the Joyce has its final week, featuring a selection of Tharp's old and recent works, from "The Fugue" (1970), a dance phrase that is varied by strict rules, as if it were a musical variation on a theme, but is performed without music, to "Westerly Round" (2001) and "Surfer at the River Styx" (2000)—a rave for ballet stars in the underworld, with the loveliest self-dismemberment scene in modern dance. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Aug. 4-8 at 8 and Aug. 9 at 2 and 8.)

LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS
The annual free public festival on the plazas of Lincoln Center kicks off this week with performances of flamenco and modern dance. Noche Flamenca, visiting from Madrid, performs on Friday night, demonstrating its purist, stripped-down rendition of the dance, which shuns the theatrical embellishment and impressive technical displays favored by other flamenco troupes. Instead, they create an intimate communal experience—just three dancers, two guitarists, and two singers united in one passionate project. And on Tuesday and Wednesday, the Paul Taylor Dance Company presents "Roses" (1985) and two 2002 works: "Dreamgirls," a farce about sex set to barbershop-quartet songs, and the triumphal "Promethean Fire," set to Bach, one of Taylor's most stirring dances in years. (Damrosch Park Bandshell, 62nd St. near Amsterdam Ave. 212-875-5766. Aug. 8 at 8 and Aug. 12-13 at 8.)

SMUIN BALLET
When Michael Smuin, a choreographer known for crossing ballet with Broadway, founded a company whose aim was to make ballet accessible, it was only a matter of time before he created something like "Dancin' with Gershwin." The material is irresistible: music everybody knows and loves with a list of interpreters diverse enough to satisfy Smuin's broad taste. The recordings he's selected—not just Fred Astaire and Ella Fitzgerald but Al Jolson, Sting, and Cher—match, in their jumble of styles, the mélange of dance idioms he samples

(tap, adagio), though not always directly. A big hit back home in San Francisco, the work has the blandly celebratory air of an Academy Awards tribute, but just when you fear you might doze off, along comes something that's inspired enough, or odd enough, to wake you up. With "Stabat Mater," set to Dvořák. (The Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Aug. 11-12 at 8. Through Aug. 16.)

"BOOTED"

Dancers in sequinned ball gowns and combat boots perform swirling duels in a flamenco-influenced evening created by Eva Dean Dance. Pieces include "Moon Garden," "Away from One's Front," and "Welcome Back." Part of the New York International Fringe Festival. (Washington Square United Methodist Church, 135 W. 4th St. 212-279-4488. Aug. 8 at 8 and Aug. 12 at 9:30. Through Aug. 20.)

"STONE AND LIGHT: VANISHED TIME"

In a community garden on the Lower East Side, Nancy Zendora presents an evening of linked dances drawn from poems that treat stones as symbols. "Stone Poem" evokes the mood of quiet contemplation in a Japanese rock garden, "The Voice of Light" uses a pyramid as a mystical point of departure, and "Inscriptions of a Cylinder Seal" is intended as a tribute to objects lost from the Baghdad Museum. (La Plaza Cultural, 9th St. at Avenue C. 212-431-5155. Aug. 5-6 and Aug. 11-12 at 8. Through Aug. 13. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

BATOTO YETU

Júlio Leitão was nine years old when civil war forced his family to flee their native Angola, but in the decades since he's maintained a connection to his homeland through African dance. In founding the children's dance company Batoto Yetu, he's brought that heritage to a community whose ties to their roots are less direct: urban youth. For their second appearance at Jacob's Pillow, the Harlem-based company presents "Nzinga," the story of a sixteenth-century African woman who fought against Portuguese colonial rule, told by more than two dozen children in vibrant costumes with drums, singing, and dance. (Ted Shawn Theatre, Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. Aug. 6-8 at 8, Aug. 9 at 2 and 8, and Aug. 10 at 2.)

IRMA OMERZO

Making her U.S. début, the Croatian choreographer Irma Omerzo presents "Mi-Nous." A duet ideally suited for the Pillow's smaller-scale Doris Duke Studio Theatre, the work turns the ordinary love play of an affectionate couple into a dance. After the woman departs, the rest of the work traces their long-distance affair with wrenching delicacy. They dance alone, trapped in solitude like caged animals, or try to reprise their opening duet and fail, forced to repeat it separately. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. Aug. 7-8 at 8:15, Aug. 9 at 2:15 and 8:15, and Aug. 10 at 5.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS

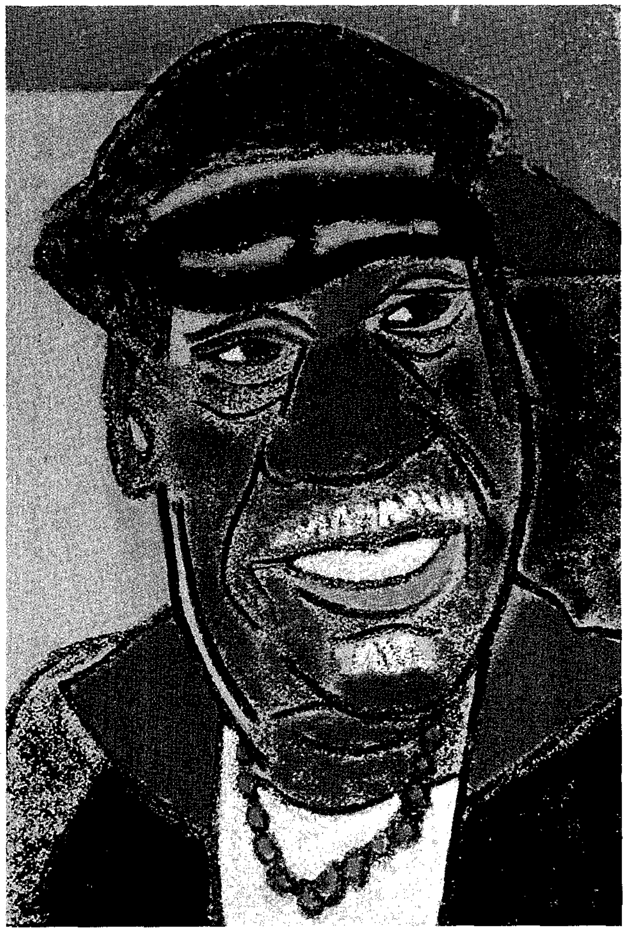
Aug. 6 at 6:30: The **Houston Person** quartet. Though Person is no longer with the late Etta Jones, his longtime vocal partner, the earthy tenor saxophonist, balancing grit and romantic persuasion, has lost none of his power to woo an audience. (North Plaza.) Aug. 9-10, starting at 2: The Roots of American Music festival brings in more than a dozen folk, blues, and rockabilly acts. The first night's headliner is the seventy-three-year-old **Bobby (Blue) Bland.** One of the greatest soul and blues singers of the past century, Bland was in town earlier this year for a double bill at the Brooklyn Academy of Music with the hipsters' darling Cody Chestnutt, who told the audience all he knew about the man: that as a child Bland's music was the only thing his father could play to soothe his mother when she was angry. The legendary folksinger **Judy Collins** headlines on the 10th. (Damrosch Park. For more information about the festival, call 212-875-5766.)

MADISON SQUARE MUSIC

"Have eight-string guitar, will funk" could be the audacious fretman **Charlie Hunter's** credo. The groove may be abstracted, but it's never dismissed. (Madison Square Park, Fifth Ave. at 23rd St. 212-538-5058. Aug. 6 at 7.)

RIVER ROCKS

Thanks to the plaintive growl of the lead vocalist, Hamilton Leithauser, the velveteen lushness of the organist, Walter Martin, and a stylishly dishevelled production aesthetic, the **Walkmen** have already eclipsed the buzz of their core member's previous outfit, Jonathan Fire*Eater, the next big thing that wasn't. The openers are the **Oranges Band,** a crisp guitar-driven ensemble out of Baltimore, and **Adam Green,** late of the potty-mouthed anti-folk duo the Moldy Peaches, whose solo work is like a cross between Jonathan Richman and Tenacious D. (Pier 54, Hudson River Park, West Side Highway at 14th St. 212-533-7275. Aug. 7 at 7.)



Bobby (Blue) Bland, outdoors at Lincoln Center.

RICHARD MERKIN

JOSHUA REDMAN

Convening his Elastic Band, featuring the organist Sam Yahel and the drummer Brian Blade, tends to loosen up this jazz saxophonist, a still-evolving former young lion. (Castle Clinton, Battery Park. Aug. 8 at 7. Free tickets, which are required, will be distributed at 5. For more information, call 212-528-2733.)

IGGY POP AND THE STOOGES

Perhaps the most seminal rock band ever, the original Stooges lit the fires that ignited hard rock, heavy metal, punk, and indie rock. During their brief late-sixties–early-seventies heyday, the group incorporated the libidinous groove of the Doors with the mutant-bluesy guitar clamor of garage rock, all of which was foisted upon audiences by the force of nature known as Iggy Pop. After succumbing to a tsunami of drugs and acrimony in 1973, Iggy and the Stooges split, leaving the founding brothers, Ron and Scott Asheton, to flounder in less celebrated ensembles while their reckless front man, with the help of David Bowie, went on to become a bona-fide icon. After years of incredulous rumors, the previously unthinkable reunion of the Asheton brothers and the ageless Pop is finally coming to fruition. Be sure to scan the audience for the sight of aging rockers weeping in gobsmacked beatitude. (Jones Beach Theatre. 212-307-7171. Aug. 8 at 7:30.)

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!

Aug. 9 at 7: A night of twenty-first-century rock *en español* with the art-house stylings of the Mexican favorites **Café Tacuba,** the high-voltage Afro-Cuban rhythms of the New York City collective **Yerba Buena,** and the sophisticated electronica of **Sidestepper,** a compelling collaboration between the British producer Richard Blair and Ivan Benavides, of the Columbian band Bloque. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. 718-855-7882, ext. 45.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE

Free shows in Manhattan's back yard. Aug. 9 at 7: **Sonny Rollins** may be in his golden years, but he's playing at a magisterial level of invention and sheer exuberance. Jazz's supreme tenor saxophonist does things his own way, dipping into an idiosyncratic repertoire that favors forgotten Al Jolson hits, Bing Crosby Hawaiian ditties, and calypsos. Relax and go along for the thrilling ride—the price couldn't be better. Aug. 10 at 3: An afternoon of reggae with **Jimmy Cliff.** The **Morgan Heritage** opens. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777.)

JOE JACKSON BAND

After years of exploring other genres of music from swing jazz to classical, the veteran New Waver, British expatriate, and present New Yorker (though he's been threatening to leave because of Bloomberg's smoking ban) recently reconvened the fighting ensemble that recorded edgy classics like "Look Sharp!" and "I'm the Man," making this show something strictly for the nostalgic. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. Aug. 12 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

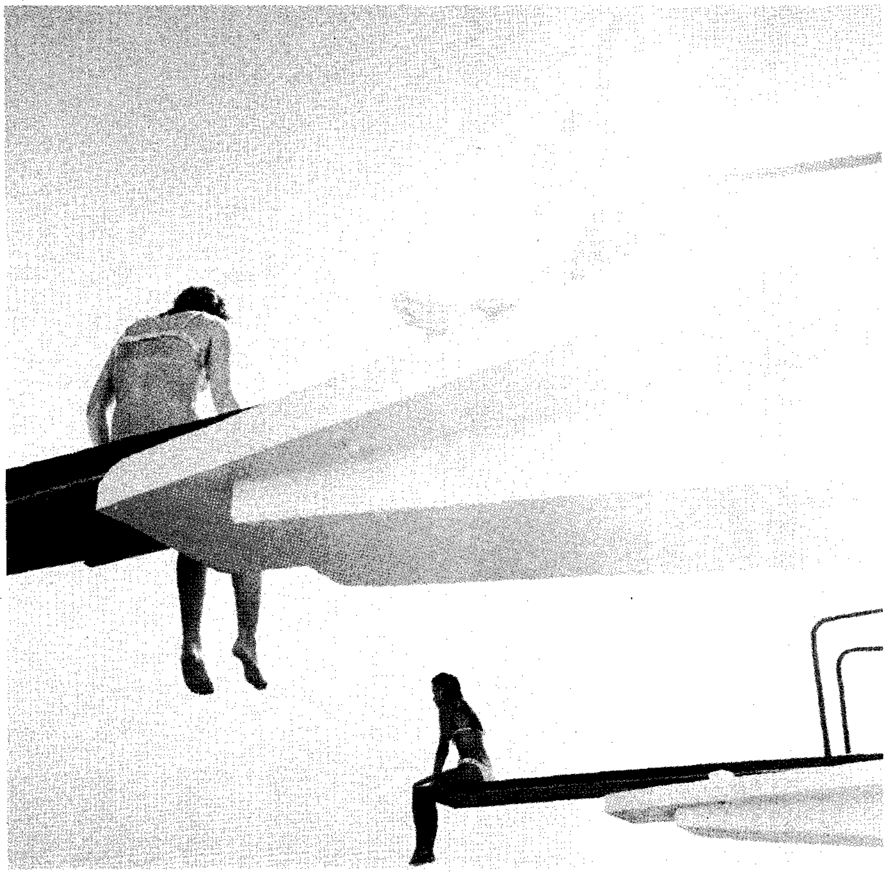
B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL

237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Aug. 12: **Otis Day & the Knights.** Take it as a sign of the impending apocalypse if some drunken fool fails to start chanting "to-ga, to-ga, to-ga" during the show (tiresomely invoking the band's cameo scene in the 1978 comedy classic "Animal House").

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Aug. 10: **Liz Phair.** Having braved the scorn of the indie-rock cognoscenti with her new self-titled album (produced, in part, by the Matrix, Avril Lavigne's songwriters), the newly ambitious singer makes a big play for pop stardom. The horror! The horror! Aug. 11: Roundly derided for their middle-of-the-road eighties bar-band fare, **Huey Lewis and the News** can, at the very least, be appreciated for upholding the tenets of classic radio-ready, hook-heavy pop.

GALAPAGOS
70 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-782-5188)—Aug. 6: The eclectic Brooklyn-based quintet **Piñataland** has an oompah flavor and an obsession with the overlooked, often bizarre, corners of twentieth-century history (their fascinating new record, "Songs for the Forgotten Future, Vol. 1" has tunes about Mathias Rust, the idealistic German teenager who was arrested after he landed a single-engine plane in Red Square, and Ota Benga, the tragic Congolese Pygmy who was once put on display with the monkeys in the Bronx Zoo). The self-described "orchestral-historical pop band" features accordion, sousaphone, and violin as well as guitar and drums.



An untitled work by Karine Laval (2002), at Benrubi (see Photography).

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Aug. 8: Zealously appalling in every possible manner, the British black-metal favorites **Cradle of Filth** return to soil the stage with giddy blasphemy, hoary shrieking, and an utterly cartoony aesthetic. Anyone easily offended by twiddily occult shenanigans should steer well clear.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Aug. 6-7: **Sidestepper** (see Concerts—Celebrate Brooklyn!).

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Aug. 8: Joe McGinty and the **Loser's Lounge** whip it good with a tribute to Devo.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Aug. 12: The adventurous Los Angeles hip-hop outfit **Black Eyed Peas** makes a bid for the big time with its new album, "Elephunk." Guests include Justin Timberlake, whose vocals on the single "Where Is the Love?" have already given the group a hit single. Old fans might be disappointed, but what's not to like in a crazy set of party anthems that's one part Fugees, two parts Outkast, and a hundred per cent fun?

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Aug. 7: Despite their gritty home town and a name that suggests a switchblade-wielding street gang, the **Detroit Cobras** are a band with versatility and a sense of history. They incorporate classic R. & B., soul, and vintage pop in their music, all the while still rocking furiously. With the long-running Atlanta, Georgia, garage rockers **Woggles**, who will be appearing with their producer, Jeff Walls (formerly of Guadalcanal Diary), on guitar in place of George Montague Holton, III, who died earlier this year. Aug. 8: Brooklyn's **Les Sans Culottes** play raunchy faux-French rock that's both a sendup of and a tribute to late-period Serge Gainsbourg and punchy *yé-yé* girl pop.

TRIBECA ROCK CLUB
16 Warren St. (212-766-1070)—Aug. 8: A night of tender emotions with the **New Amsterdams**, a side project of the vocalist Matthew Pryor, who keeps his heart on his sleeve as he replaces the gutter-punk energy of his other band, the Get Up Kids, with more acoustic arrangements. With **Matt Pond PA.** This group's latest album, "The Nature of Maps," is laden with songs that reveal themselves slowly—anyone in search of easy hooks and sing-along choruses might be disappointed by the swirling cello and vibraphone-heavy orchestration. It's chamber pop with an emphasis on the chamber, and live it's music that turns a club into a personal bedroom concert.

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-0505)—Aug. 10: Neo-Luddites have broad appeal, as evidenced by the California band **Grandaddy,** whose spacey, ambivalent rock counts among its fan base everyone from cash-strapped idealists to BMW-driving Philadelphia lawyers. Led by the high, lonely voice of Jason Lytle, Grandaddy assumes a reflective stance on the decay of technology in songs with titles such as "Broken Household Appliance National Forest."

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through Aug. 10: The Brazilian composer and performer **João Bosco,** a post-bossa-nova giant in his own country, makes a rare New York City appearance.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through Aug. 10: It's always great news when the pioneering soprano saxophonist **Steve Lacy** brings his rigorous quintet to town, but an extra treat comes in the form of his special guest, the little-seen trombonist **George Lewis,** who makes a typically strong impression on Lacy's recent album, "Beat Suite." Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Among the most gifted of the host of spry tenor saxophonists that exploded onto the scene in the nineties, **Craig Handy** (here with a quartet Aug. 7) has continued to spread his net wide, grabbing the attention of Herbie Hancock and Steve Coleman, among others. Aug. 8: **Josh Roseman,** an in-demand new-jazz trombonist who has made big noise with everyone from Dave Holland and Dave Douglas to Sheryl Crow and Sean Lennon, steps out with his own quintet.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Aug. 5-6: The **Ray Vega Latin Jazz Sextet.** The trumpeter Vega's propulsive unit spices up bebop-and-beyond classics with peppery rhythms. Aug. 7-10: **Steve Wilson,** whose saxophone and clarinet work enlivens Chick Corea's Origin band, gives his own quartet a boost with the addition of guest vocalists **Phillip Manuel** (Thursday and Friday) and **Carla Cook** (Saturday and Sunday), both of whom appear on Wilson's recent release "Soulful Song." Aug. 11: The imaginative saxophonist **Michael Blake** stops by with Free Association, his signature new-jazz outfit. Dining.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—Aug. 8-9: **Steve Turre,** our premier mainstream trombonist, pays tribute to the king of all mainstream trombonists, the late J. J. Johnson, whose fluency and lyricism set the modern standard for the instrument.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Aug. 10: Jazz-funk fusion may be on trumpeter **Roy Hargrove's** mind—check out his current release, "Hard Groove"—but don't expect a po-mo jam at this venerable establishment. Here, the estimable trumpeter is sure to don his hard-bop hat. He will be, after all, in the company of a polished quintet featuring the old-school pianist **Ronnie Matthews.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—On May 16, 1703, the six-foot-eight-inch tsar Peter the Great stood in a swamp beside the Neva River and proclaimed it the site for a new city that would take his name and earn the sobriquet "the Venice of the North." For **"Celebrating St. Petersburg,"** the Met raided its collection to mark the tricentennial of imperial Russia's capital city, and the small exhibition is a dazzler, stuffed with German silver, Sèvres porcelain, and snuffboxes encrusted with gold, enamel, ivory, and jewels from the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-96), an era aptly dubbed the "Age of Diamonds." Through Jan. 25. ◆ Viewers who didn't get enough Manet with their Velázquez can take solace in several seascapes inspired by an American Civil War battle waged off the coast of France. (Before becoming a painter, Manet sailed to Brazil on a cargo ship; he enrolled in art school after twice failing the Naval Academy entrance exam.) On June 19, 1864, the Confederacy's most successful raider, the C.S.S. Alabama, was sunk two hours after it launched a sneak attack on the U.S.S. Kearsarge. Manet painted the battle from imagination (abetted by news reports), then travelled to Boulogne-sur-Mer to paint a portrait of the victorious ship anchored there. Also on view are works by Whistler, Courbet, and Monet (all inspired by

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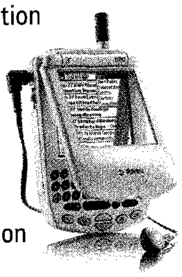

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Manet), not to mention the captain's log and an elaborate model of the Kearsarge. Through Aug. 17. ♦ **"Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus."** Through Aug. 17. ♦ After witnessing the atrocities of the First World War as a medic, the German painter Max Beckmann took up Expressionism to "reproach God for his errors." The museum recently acquired the famous "Hell" portfolio, eleven black-and-white lithographs that chronicle Beckmann's visit to Berlin in 1919 during the March Rebellion, when twelve hundred people were killed in two days. The original owner of the portfolio, the industrialist Hugo Stinnes, appears in a stinging caricature as a puppeteer dangling a marionette emperor, surrounded by human skulls and sacks of cash. This series' masterly balance between chaotic and carnivalesque is an amuse-bouche for the retrospective of the artist currently at MOMA QNS. Through Aug. 31. ♦ A playful roof-garden sculpture—a painted aluminum cottage with a red roof, white and yellow walls, and a blue chimney—by Roy Lichtenstein, the late Pop artist, sits on its own little lawn with a sign warning viewers to keep off the grass. Through Nov. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)

33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—**"Ansel Adams at 100"** is a retrospective of the mountain man, whose exquisitely made, self-conscious photographs of spectacular Western scenery are a hard case in modern art. In form, Adams was impeccably modernist, and he had a command of photographic aesthetics as thoroughgoing, within its narrower range, as Edward Weston's. In feeling, Adams was a populist romantic, retreading sentimental conventions of God's country. To enjoy his imperious mastery and his swooning piety equally does not seem possible; they trip each other up. And the hanging of the smallish prints in the warehouse space of MOMA QNS is a blunder—the show looks dwarfed and dismal. Through Nov. 3. ♦ This succinct retrospective tests Max Beckmann's long-pending claim to parity with the modern masters of Paris. The curator Robert Storr's trenchant selection and airy hanging make a winning case. How does one look at art that is laden with elusive, often quite lugubrious portent? The show's answer: as painting. Beckmann's manipulations of aggressive, theatrical space are dazzlingly supple. The trick, for the viewer, is to receive the pictures passively, letting their organization declare itself. Even, or especially, when its imagery is gnarled and bizarre, a great Beckmann attains startling unity, notably through making light-dark modelling inseparable from warm-cool color. Depth and surface become one. Beckmann does all the work: our role is to be bowled over. Through Sept. 29. ♦ **"Andy Warhol: Screen Tests,"** twenty-eight selections from the artist's series of portraits on film—lingering 16-mm. shots of various subjects. Through Sept. 1. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism"** is a concise, bewitching show of paintings, drawings, and sculptures—many of them making their first trip outside Russia. Through Sept. 7. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—In **"The American Effect,"** forty-seven artists and filmmakers react to the myths and policies of the United States. Through Oct. 12. ♦ For sheer joy in materials, no one can compete with Sarah Sze. Binder clips, bright-blue Windex bottles, fake grass, PVC pipe, drinking straws, orange string—put it all together in the Whitney's moatlike sunken courtyard and you've got **"The Triple Point of Water."** This refers to the solid, liquid, and gaseous states of H_2O, and it's an ethereal title, but the elaborate installation is a marvel, a delicate, multilevel habitat, a miniature city or ecosystem animated by little fans and burbling aquariums. Through Oct. 9. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA

120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (212-878-2550)—The artist Mark Bradford supports himself as a hairstylist in South Central Los Angeles—he's best known for shimmering abstract paintings collaged with the sheer strips of paper used in permanent waves. A billboard-size example in vivid blue is the strongest element in this miscellany of an installation, inspired by Ponce de León and his quest for the fountain of youth in Florida. There are several sculptural one-liners, including shelves of water bottles adorned with silver champagne plaques (Poland Spring with bling). Other elements are far more cryptic, like the stuffed crow flying through the wall (an allusion to Jim Crow meant to refer to alleged voting irregularities in black districts during the past Presidential election?). Through Oct. 24. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—Some notes on chocolate: to make a bar of dark chocolate, you need about twenty cacao seeds—a princely sum in the Aztec markets of pre-Columbian Mexico, where *cacahuatl* had been consumed since 600 B.C. A rain-forest midge no bigger than a capital letter on this page pollinates the cacao tree. Sugar was not added to chocolate until Spanish conquistadores imported it to Europe, and nearly all the chocolate produced in the U.S. during the Second World War was reserved for military use. Want more? The **"Chocolate"** show illustrates a cornucopia of ecological, technological, and cultural facts about the essential indulgence, with interactive exhibits, artifacts, and, of course, free samples. Through Sept. 7. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Robert Lesser, whose collection of toy robots wintered at the museum a couple of years ago, has loaned another pop trove: more than a hundred paintings for the covers of pulp magazines, primarily from the thirties and forties. The artists were academically trained illustrators like J. Allen St. John, Rafael De Soto, and Walter Baumhofer, and they worked in a fiercely competitive environment that nourished pictorial testosterone. If you're curious to see the unreconstructed masculine id in action or haven't sublimated a thirst for bound blondes or spurting pistols under titles like "The Grove of Doom," this exhibit is a kitsch cornucopia. Through Aug. 31. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Willem van Tetrode: Bronze Sculptures of the Renaissance."** When the Dutch sculptor van Tetrode (circa 1525-80) went to Italy, he studied with Benvenuto Cellini and plied his trade by casting small but heroic bronzes after classical masterworks such as the Apollo Belvedere and the Medici Venus. He returned to Delft in 1567 and initiated a craze for such statuettes, some forty of which are now on view, predominantly brawny Herculeses and miniature Mercurys. Tetrode's emphasis on torqued musculature earned him comparison to Michelangelo, and his influence on younger compatriots such as Hendrick Goltzius makes this show a pendant to the Met's exhibition of Goltzius's paintings, prints, and drawings. Through Sept. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Friday evenings until 9; and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

1 Bowling Green (212-668-6624)—Buffalo hunting and deerskin ceremonial garb may have gone the way of all flesh for Native Americans in the prairie states, but the horse is still a *sunka-wakan* ("holy animal," in Sioux), and traditions of competitive riding and roping remain vital. **"Legends of Our Times: Native Ranching and Rodeo Life on the Plains and Plateau"** celebrates the exploits of the tribal bronco busters, barrel racers, and bull riders and the artisans who make the stuff they wear, from beaded parade regalia to T-shirts and rodeo posters. Through March 7. (Open daily, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

583 Broadway (212-219-1222)—The boisterous and ambitious **"Black President"** show pays tribute to the late Fela Anikulapo-Kuti (1938-97), a visionary Nigerian musician (pioneer of the Afro-beat sound), ladies' man (husband to twenty-eight wives), and activist (self-appointed "black president"). Some artists riff on Fela's black-power politics (Klaus Bürgel and Kara Walker sardonically re-create tools of bondage used in slavery in twenty-two-karat-gold miniature). Others wryly comment on his attitudes toward women (Yinka Shonibare fills a platform stage with brightly clad but headless female figures). Near the start of the show, Barkley Hendricks sums up Fela's complex character in a portrait of the artist as a haloed saint, with a microphone in one hand and the other on his crotch. The legacy of this controversial genius overshadows the impact (both collective and individual) of the art work, but the show is a must-see nonetheless. Through Sept. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

TABLES FOR TWO

HARRY CIPRIANI

781 Fifth Ave., at 60th St. (212-753-5566)—For many New Yorkers, the lack of any countryside to speak of is more than redeemed by the accompanying absence of country clubs. Many restaurants try to fill this vacuum, but none does it so well as Harry Cipriani, which has provided diners with an almost nostalgic sense of not belonging since 1985. The cozy room in the Sherry Netherland, with its gold-stitched linen curtains, is generally bustling, but still intimate enough to overhear the elegant Indian woman exchanging phone numbers with Denise Rich, the waiter shouting in Spanish that they've run out of sport coats, the general manager letting a couple know that a Venetian count has taken care of their check.

The general manager, Hassan Elgarrahy, dominates the room, boasting about his time in the marathon (2:34!) and herding cowed waiters with a variety of Cagney-like shoulder rolls and head feints. The waiters, who move in squadrons, dodge eye contact or disappear for long stretches, then show up suddenly to present the food. Their Old World lack of ceremony leaves patrons time to notice little things, like the people who came in later getting their food first.

Cipriani descends directly from Harry's Bar in Venice, the Lost Generation joint that invented the Bellini, a mixture of Prosecco and white-peach purée that still attracts the big spenders. Given the air of studied indifference here, the food comes as a surprise. The appetizers—seared scallops or the spicy tuna tartare with a frizz of mâche—have kept up with the latest culinary fashions, but the entrées have a time-capsule quality. The hearty portions are presented as Hemingway might have got them—charred steak-house sirloin, grilled branzino, a plate of calf's liver *alla Veneziana* boldly uniform in its liver color—accompanied by the sort of boiled vegetables you might expect at a Republican fund-raiser. Their throwback deliciousness, like the banker décor, recalls the Eisenhower era, when food was uncomplicated and proteinaceous and roughage was viewed with Red-scare suspicion. (Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Entrées $26.95-$48.95.)

—Kevin Conley

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

"PUDDLE-WONDERFUL"

Three hundred and fifty-five pounds of blue-and-white candy—the combined weight of the late artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres and his lover—spill from a corner at the entrance to this elegant, intelligent show of conceptual art with a decorative bent. (Viewers are invited to eat the mints, effectively completing the piece by depleting it.) In the next room, a grid of wax panels (a pixellated self-portrait by Ferrán Martin) is installed in a skylight; as it melts, puddles of purple and pink accumulate on the floor like cheerful tears. Through Aug. 15. (Artemis Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave. 212-445-0444.)

"WORD WORKS"
Advertising and comic books did not, of course, invent the juxtaposition of words and images. But they pushed the relationship toward visual puns and delirious overstatement and understatement, and it's that style that attracted the twenty-nine artists in "Word Works." This snappy little show, which emphasizes works on paper, covers an impressive range, from eminences like Ed Ruscha, Jenny Holzer, and Saul Steinberg to younger favorites like Chris Ware, creator of Acme Comics, and Joe Amrhein, whose old-fashioned sign-painting decries and/or applauds "the gimmicky apologies for painting that pass for painting these days." Through Aug. 8. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338.)

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

VICTORIA GOTTI
In the peaceful alternative universe depicted here, no long-legged woman lacks for a coy, coöperative animal companion, whether lapdog or leashed lion. Gotti, who signs her paintings "V. Gotti Sr." to distinguish herself from her daughter, the columnist and romance novelist of the same name, veers, in the family style, into NC-17 territory here via full nudity in mixed company. Her gallerist has gone on record comparing her rough style, which lies somewhere between fashion illustration and folk art, to Manet's and Cézanne's. Through Aug. 22. (Gale-Martin, 134 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 646-638-2525.)

GROUP SHOW
The five artists in this ingenious exhibition share an alchemical m.o., transforming what Kurt Schwitters called the "spoils and relics" of everyday life into art. Back in 1969, the Swiss artist Dieter Roth (1930-98) coated a paper ziggurat with chocolate, yogurt, and fruit juice, now ossified into a cryptic talisman. Rachel Harrison also plays with her food; she's at her slapstick-formal best tucking a package of cookies inside a cutaway box housing DVD imagery of dazed clubgoers at a vending machine. But the star of the show is the cult filmmaker Jack Smith (1932-89). His mixed-media costumes—a man-size lobster, tin-can brassieres—have a gender-bending, madcap zeal that presages the work of young artists from Assume Vivid Astro Focus to Forcefield. Through Aug. 15. (Matthew Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.)

"ONLINE"
A good show with a dumb name, "Online" is a sprawling yet cohesive and instructive survey of contemporary drawing, which unfolds here as a spectrum of things feisty, ingenious, and meditative. Curated by the man-about-town Charlie Finch (whose book is called "Most Art Sucks") with the Drawing Center's George Negroponte and Robert Storr (formerly of MOMA), the thirty-eight-person show contains almost no duds—standouts include wall drawings by Mary Temple and David Brody, a burned-paper filigree by Charles Spurrier, Su-En Wong's multiple self-portraits, Beth Campbell's diaristic maps, and Daniel Zeller's obsessive quasi-cartography. Through Aug. 9. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 212-929-0500.)

GALLERIES-SOHO

CLEMENS WEISS
If prophets doodled on their morning papers, the results might look like these drawings. Angels, erupting volcanoes, alligators, and comets swirl through miasmas of hot orange and red, sometimes affixed directly to newspaper, sometimes simply nodding to newspapers as a source (some works include words such as "possibly" and "enjoy" in *Times* typeface). The works are framed in heavy glass crisscrossed with seams of glue; there are also crystallographic glass-and-glue stellae and shelving units. A Blakean grandeur is implied, but on the whole, as one partially obscured headline puts it, the work is about "big visions unfulfilled." Through Aug. 1. (Ronald Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 212-226-3232.)

The New Museum presents "Black President," a boisterous show with many works, all inspired by Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, the pioneer of Afro-beat.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

PHOTOGRAPHY

"CMYK: PART 2"
In this installment of the gallery's summer course on contemporary color photography, tourists and overripe fruit provide the instruction. Karine Laval shows Portuguese swimmers and divers in the bleached-out tones of a too-bright summer day. Kyoto's Golden Temple, seen through Martin Parr's unerring eye, becomes a beautiful thought bubble over the jumble of yellow hats on the students looking at it from across a greenish pond. Massimo Vitali's two huge prints, a sunny beach scene and a French picnic for thousands, are compositionally complex and vibrant, while Zachary Zavislak's dense still-lifes, with peaches, plums, or watermelon, are masterly in the way they are lit, seemingly from inside. Through Sept. 6. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 212-517-3766.)

"OASES"
Firmly in the tradition of tenuously themed summer shows, "Oases" dispenses with palm-fringed desert ponds in favor of mobile homes stranded in dark meadows and Swedish industrial landscapes. Yannick Demmerle's autumn forest is tranquil, and Yasuhiro Ishimoto's shot from a Japanese palace into its garden is compositionally perfect, as they both should be. Lois Conner has three photographs taken in China, of a terraced rice field, sand dunes in the Gobi Desert, and reflected water lilies, that are all startling in their contemplative beauty. Stéphane Couturier's view of Seoul, and most immediately a construction site, from a stand of trees—a picture you could stare at for half an hour—speaks most clearly to the show's intention to rethink the oasis as a thought-provoking and obviously imperilled place. The gallery's annual summer sale includes color Polaroids by Walker Evans, an Atget doorway, and a walking woman from Eadweard Muybridge's "Animal Locomotion" series. Through Aug. 22. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.)

"PROTEST"
A collection of many iconic images of moments of protest, along with a few surprises, this show pits Burt Glinn's Fidel Castro against Steve Schapiro's George Wallace, and Garry Winogrand's angry New York City construction workers against Bruce Davidson's images of the 1963 March on Washington. Marc Riboud's closeup of a woman holding a flower in front of the bayonet of a National Guardsman at an anti-Vietnam War rally presages Stuart Franklin's panorama of a lone man in front of a line of four tanks in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Angry skinheads and Klansmen pale in contrast to both Leonard Freed's lone nurse in hospital whites protesting pornography in Times Square and Diane Arbus's unforgettable "Patriotic Young Man with a Flag." Through Aug. 29. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

Short List

ANSEL ADAMS
Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600.
Through Aug. 22.

RUTH BERNHARD / IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM
Stevenson, 338 W. 23rd St. 212-352-0070.
Through Aug. 16.

JEAN-LUC MYLAYNE
Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300.
Through Aug. 15.

TOMOKO SAWADA
Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 212-752-1223.
Through Sept. 6.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S
Ever wonder how many of the security guards, auctioneers, and experts at your favorite auction house or museum spend their off-hours invoking the muse to inspire them in their own work? You can find out at Christie's third annual staff art exhibition, which features over a hundred works by more than forty employees, many of whom are professional artists. The show includes paintings, photographs, ceramics, and installations in a refreshing variety of styles and themes, from the cartoonish, brightly colored paintings in plastic by Jonathan Laib (art handler) to the eerie urban nightscapes by Noa Rubin (art photographer) to the "quirky office supplies" of Cary Leibowitz (prints specialist). There won't be an auction, but private sales are certainly allowed. Through Aug. 15. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

SWANN
Aug. 6 at 2:30: A hundred posters from the First and Second World Wars start off an auction of vintage posters on a variety of subjects. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

Anthony Dean Griffey leads the cast of "The Good Soldier Schweik" at Glimmerglass.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL
Aug. 7 at 8: Fabio Biondi and his early-music group Europa Galante, justly renowned for the moody glamour and rhythmic bite of their performances of Baroque instrumental works, join with a quintet of vocalists to offer the American première of Alessandro Scarlatti's "La Santissima Trinità," a long-lost oratorio from 1715. (Alice Tully Hall.) ♦ Aug. 8-9 at 8: The violinist Leila Josefowicz and the mezzo-soprano Susan Graham, both Americans, are a study in extremes—Josefowicz has the wiry intensity of a perpetual up-and-comer, while Graham exhibits a relaxed sense of grandeur that's both down-home and divaesque. Both make contributions to a concert that combines symphonic works by Mozart (the Violin Concerto No. 3 in G Major) and Beethoven (the Symphony No. 2 in D Major) with operatic arias by Handel and Gluck; Philippe Jordan conducts. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 10 at 5: Jon Kimura Parker joins the Juilliard String Quartet in a concert of Haydn, Beethoven, and Dvořák (the Piano Quintet). (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 12-13 at 8: Old-school Romanticism makes a comeback at the festival, with Emmanuel Krivine conducting the Mostly Mozart Orchestra in symphonies by Prokofiev (the "Classical") and Mozart and joining the violinist Midori in two bonbons by Saint-Saëns (the Rondo Capriccioso and the "Havanaise"). (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 12 at 8: Nicholas McGegan leads his Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and a clutch of superb young singers (including Lisa Saffer and Mark Padmore, enjoying their festival débuts) in a Mark Lamos production of Mozart's **"Il Re Pastore."** (La Guardia Concert Hall, Amsterdam Ave. at 65th St. Through Aug. 16.) (For tickets to all performances, call 212-721-6500.)

BARGEMUSIC
Aug. 7-8 at 7:30: After a woolly week of British new music, normalcy returns to the barge with an all-Beethoven program. Randall Hodgkinson performs three piano sonatas from across the composer's career: No. 7 in D Major, No. 26 in E-Flat Major ("Les Adieux"), and No. 32 in C Minor. ♦ Aug. 9 at 7:30 and Aug. 10 at 4: The violinists Mark Peskanov and Tomoko Katsura and the cellist Eric Jacobsen, among others, offer music by Bach (the Violin Concerto in A Minor), Vivaldi (the Concerto for Two Violins in A Minor), and Schubert. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

OPERA COMPANY OF BROOKLYN
Music-technology systems have always been viewed with dread by classical musicians, but the "Virtual Orchestra" that Jay Meetze, this little company's music director, is employing for **"The Magic Flute"** has sufficiently freed up his human-resources funds to let him hire more live singers than he's ever used before. (The system allows a human "symphonist" to control the tempo of the digitally sampled music in response to a conductor's direction.) He conducts a cast of young hopefuls in a staged production, sung in German with spoken dialogue in English. (Voorhees Theatre, 186 Jay St., Brooklyn. Aug. 9 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND
The Italian pianist Julian Gargiulo performs music by Beethoven and Chopin in the latest concert of City Island's cozy chamber-music series. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., the Bronx. 212-724-4474. Aug. 10 at 12:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
The festival, celebrating its twentieth anniversary, sprinkles its standard-repertory programs with a selection of world premières. Aug. 6 at 7:30: In the highlight of "Rorem and Paris," Ned Rorem, turning Ives on his head, marks the anniversary season with "The Unquestioned Answer," a première for flute, piano, and strings; the composer himself turns eighty this year. Music by Satie and Fauré (the Piano Quartet in C Minor) completes the tribute program, along with Rorem's "Bright Music," a piece the festival commissioned in 1987. ♦ Aug. 9 at 7:30: The festival's distinguished musicians (including the violist Cynthia Phelps and the pianist Ursula Oppens) buckle down to explore the "Beethoven of the C Minor Mood," with the composer's Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 1, No. 3, followed by two works in major keys (the "Archduke" Trio and the String Quintet in C Major). ♦ Aug. 10 at 6:30: Martin, Oppens, Phelps and friends play music by Ravel, Jongen, and Brahms (the Piano Quintet). (Bridgehampton, N.Y. 631-537-3507.)

COOPERSTOWN CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
The Farmer's Museum, in Cooperstown, a nineteenth-century village complete with its own tavern, blacksmith shop, schoolhouse, and church, is not the sort of place where you'd expect to find a chamber-music festival. But the museum's stone barn is said to have fine acoustics, so why not? The series opens with music for winds, including the Sextet by Poulenc and quintets by Milhaud, Beethoven, and Barber; the performers include the flautist Linda Chesis, the pianist Gilbert Kalish, and the bassoonist Peter Kolkay. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 888-547-1450. Aug. 6 at 8.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
The conductor Charles Dutoit, most persuasive in the Franco-Russian repertory, gets a chance to prove himself in the complete concertos of Brahms, the highlights of the first concerts of the orchestra's annual residency at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. Aug. 6: Masterworks by Beethoven (the "Coriolan" Overture and the Fifth Symphony) bookend Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1, played by Emanuel Ax. ♦ Aug. 7: The Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Yefim Bronfman) precedes Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring." ♦ Aug. 8: Orchestral spectaculars by Ravel (the "Rhapsodie Espagnole") and Strauss ("Also Sprach Zarathustra") share the program with the more sober sounds of Brahms's Violin Concerto (with Elmar Oliveira). ♦ Aug. 9: The Double Concerto (with the violinist Joshua Bell and the cellist Boris Pergamenchikov), offered along with works by Beethoven, Rachmaninoff (the "Symphonic Dances"), and Ravel. (Saratoga, N.Y. 518-587-3330. All performances begin at 8:15.)

TANGLEWOOD
Aug. 6 at 8:30: Roger Norrington leads the Camerata Salzburg in an all-Beethoven concert (including the "Eroica" Symphony). ♦ Aug. 8 at 8:30: An all-Mozart program, with Peter Oundjian conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the Symphonies Nos. 29 and 39 and the Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor (with Richard Goode). ♦ Aug. 9 at 8:30: Edo de Waart, a proud champion of the music of John Adams since his days at the head of the San Francisco Symphony, conducts the composer's "Harmonielehre" on a program

with Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto (with Yefim Bronfman). ♦ Aug. 10 at 2:30: The soprano Renée Fleming joins de Waart and the B.S.O. for an afternoon of Strauss: the Serenade for Winds, Op. 7, the "Four Last Songs," and the "Alpine Symphony." ♦ Aug. 10-11 at 8:30: The Tanglewood Music Center, nothing if not loyal to its favorite alumni composers, presents a double bill of world-première chamber operas (both with Spanish themes) by the klezmer and tango-influenced Argentinean composer Osvaldo Golijov and the Dutch-born composer (and erstwhile punk rocker) Robert Zuidam. Golijov's **"Ainadamar"** (with a libretto by David Henry Hwang) details the Fascists' brutal murder of Federico García Lorca during the Spanish Civil War, seen through the eyes of one of Lorca's favorite actresses (Dawn Upshaw sings the lead); Robert Spano conducts. Zuidam's **"Rage d'Amours"** follows the life of Juana la Loca (daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella), a sixteenth-century queen (portrayed by Lucy Shelton) who was declared insane and confined to a monastery for clinging to her dead husband's body; Stefan Asbury. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL

Aug. 7 at 6: The Caramoor Virtuosi, young string players of promise, perform music by Schoenberg ("Verklärte Nacht") and Brahms (the String Quintet in G Major). ♦ Aug. 8 at 8: The Virtuosi return to offer music by Spohr, Chen Yi, and Mendelssohn (the Sextet in D Major for Piano and Strings). ♦ Aug. 9 at 8: In the festival's final concert, the Orchestra of St. Luke's marks the close of its twenty-fifth-anniversary season with an all-Haydn program: the Cello Concerto in C Major (with Daire Fitzgerald), the Trumpet Concerto (with Chris Gekker), and the Symphony No. 44 in E Minor. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA

Aug. 7 at 8 and Aug. 9 at 1:30: Robert Kurka's **"The Good Soldier Schweik,"** a snazzy two-act opera based on the classic comic novel of the First World War by Jaroslav Hašek. Rhoda Levine's new production features a cast led by Anthony Dean Griffey; Stewart Robertson conducts. ♦ Aug. 8 at 8 and Aug. 11 at 2: Offenbach's **"Bluebeard,"** with Tracey Welborn, Phyllis Pancella, and Anthony Laciura; Gerald Steichen. ♦ Aug. 9 at 8 and Aug. 12 at 2: Chas Rader-Shieber's stunning production of Handel's **"Orlando,"** featuring sterling contributions from the sopranos Christine Brandes and Joyce Guyer, the countertenor Bejun Mehta (in the title role), the male soprano Michael Maniaci, and the bass David Pittsinger; Bernard Labadie. ♦ Aug. 10 at 2: **"Don Giovanni,"** with Palle Knudsen, Maria Kanyova, Amy Burton, Kyle Ketelsen, and John McVeigh; Robertson conducts. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Aug. 8 at 8: The Tokyo String Quartet joins the pianist Claude Frank and the violist Jesse Levine in a program of music by Kodály, Mozart (the chamber version of the Piano Concerto No. 12 in A Major), and Dvořák. ♦ Aug. 9 at 8: The guitarist Eliot Fisk, the bassoonist Frank Morelli, and the Argentinean composer-pianist Pablo Ziegler team up for an evening of tangos, flamenco numbers, and Latin-American classical works. (Routes 44 and 272, Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000.)

PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Aug. 8 at 8: The venerable ensemble kicks off a three-concert celebration of the opening of the Poconos' ten-thousand-seat Tom Ridge Pavilion, with an all-Mozart program conducted by Pinchas Zukerman. (Mountain Laurel Center for the Performing Arts, Bushkill, Pa. 570-643-4100.)

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL: "JANÁČEK AND HIS WORLD"

After preparing the way with a tempting selection of Czech-related offerings held in Bard College's curvaceous new Frank Gehry-designed performance center, Leon Botstein brings his annual festival fully into focus by concentrating two weekends of concerts and symposia on Leoš Janáček. The festival will intensively examine the composer's life and music in a broad historical context, with concerts featuring not only his own works but music by his Czech forebears and contemporaries; the long roster of performers includes the singers Jennifer Aylmer and Christopher Robertson, the pianists Jeremy Denk and William Wolfram, the Casal String Quartet, and the American Symphony Orchestra with Botstein conducting. For a complete schedule of events, see www.summerscape.bard.edu.; pre-concert talks precede most of the programs. Aug. 8 at 8:30: "Leoš Janáček: An Introduction," a concert of chamber works that includes the Concertino (for piano and chamber ensemble) and the String Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Letters." ♦ Aug. 9 at 1:30: "Coming of Age as a Composer," in which several of the composer's shorter works are offered along with music by Smetana (the Piano Trio in G Minor), Dvořák, and Rubinstein. ♦ Aug. 9 at 8: "Music and Storytelling," an orchestral program featuring not only music by Janáček ("Taras Bulba" and excerpts from the operas "The Excursions of Mr. Brouček" and "The Cunning Little Vixen") but also pieces by Smetana, Fibich, and Dvořák ("The Noon Witch," one of the most enigmatic and enticing of his late works). ♦ Aug. 10 at 1:30: A chamber concert (including Set I of "On an Overgrown Path" for piano) with commentary by the scholar Michael Beckerman. ♦ Aug. 10 at 5: More chamber music, piano pieces, and songs, by Janáček (the Piano Sonata, "From the Street"), Suk, Foerster, and others. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7412.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS

Aug. 9 at 8: The pianist Audrey Andrist offers a nicely heterogeneous recital of Chopin, Mozart, Hindemith, Britten ("Night-Piece"), and Schumann ("Carnaval"). ♦ Aug. 10 at 3: Strata, a trio in which Andrist teams up with a violinist and a clarinettist, performs more Britten and Schumann along with music by Brahms (the Clarinet Sonata No. 1 in F Minor) and Arutunian. (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8217.)

MARLBORO FESTIVAL

The festival, chamber music's holiest shrine, continues its series of performances by some of the world's leading artists and their very talented students. (Marlboro, Vt. 802-254-2394. Aug. 9 at 8:30 and Aug. 10 at 2:30.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN

Aug. 10 at 3: A performance of Shostakovich's Quartet No. 15—his final essay in the genre, a sequence of six adagios that could serve as his own requiem—is always a special event; it is the centerpiece of a program by Denmark's Zapolski String Quartet that also features music by Haydn and Mendelssohn (the Piano Quartet in B Minor, with Tanja Zapolski). (Routes 63 and 126, Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

Aug. 7 at 7: The Canadian artist Marcel Dzama celebrates the publication of "The Berlin Years," his new collection of prints and drawings. The evening also includes readings by Sam Lipsyte, Jeff Johnson, and others. (Galapagos, 70 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Aug. 11 at 6:30: The literary magazine *One Story* presents the writer Scott Snyder, who will read a single piece of his fiction. (Arlene Grocery, 95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Aug. 11 at 7: Carlo Rotella offers passages from "Cut Time: An Education at the Fights," his new collection of essays about boxing and life. (Half King, 505 W. 23rd St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS

Aug. 6 at 7: Sabrina Jones, Seth Tobocman, and other activism-minded cartoonists join Brian Gage, the author of "Snark Inc.: A Corporate Fable," for a discussion about big media and political art. (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Aug. 6 at 7:30: Wendy Pearlman, the author of "Occupied Voices: Stories of Everyday Life from the Second Intifada," talks about her travels among the Palestinians. (Barnes & Noble, 4 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Park Life

In 1863, at the peak of the Civil War, a package turned up on President Lincoln's desk containing stereoscopic images of the municipal wonder taking shape up in New York: Central Park. These high-tech photographic scenes were intended to soothe the President's nerves, just as the Park has calmed New Yorkers for generations. This summer is the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the state's wise decision—influenced by the preëminent nineteenth-century landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing—to set aside a giant chunk of swampy Manhattan ground for the creation of the first major landscaped public park in the United States. **CENTRAL PARK, AN AMERICAN MASTERPIECE** (Abrams), by Sara Cedar Miller, the Park's official historian, is itself a welcoming oasis, teeming with photographs of lush meadows, rustic pergolas, whimsical bridges, and Catskills-inspired ravines. The Park's eight hundred and forty-three acres, we learn, are easily discernible by shuttle astronauts; its sunken transverse roads were the prototype for the modern highway system; and its Great Lawn, originally a reservoir, was filled in with rubble from the Rockefeller Center construction site.

RICHARD McGUIRE

The park we know today—featuring Balto the sled dog, Cleopatra's Needle, and Wollman Rink—descends from design entry No. 33, the famous "Greensward" plan of architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. The University of Massachusetts Press has reprinted **WALKS AND TALKS OF AN AMERICAN FARMER IN ENGLAND**, Olmsted's engaging account of his 1850 ramble around England and Wales, including his fateful encounter with Birkenhead Park, near Liverpool. "This magnificent pleasure-ground," Olmsted wrote, "is entirely, unreservedly, and for ever the people's own."

—*Mark Rozzo*

MOVIES OPENING

LE DIVORCE
James Ivory adapts Diane Johnson's comedic novel, about an American girl (Kate Hudson) who goes to live with her sister (Naomi Watts) in Paris after her sister's French husband leaves her. Also with Glenn Close and Stockard Channing. Opening Aug. 8.

FREAKY FRIDAY
A comedy in which a conservative mother (Jamie Lee Curtis) and her aspiring-rock-star daughter (Lindsay Lohan) find themselves inside each other's body after eating a pair of cursed fortune cookies. Opening Aug. 6.

SEASIDE
Julie Lopes-Curval's drama follows the intersecting lives of the inhabitants of a coastal resort town through a calendar year. With Bulle Ogier as a woman with a gambling problem. In French. Opening Aug. 6. (Film Forum.)

STEP INTO LIQUID
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Aug. 8. (Sunshine Cinema.)

S.W.A.T.
A thriller inspired by the seventies television series, in which an élite police unit must transport a drug lord (Olivier Martinez) who has offered a hundred-million-dollar reward to anyone who frees him from custody. With Samuel L. Jackson and Colin Farrell. Opening Aug. 8.

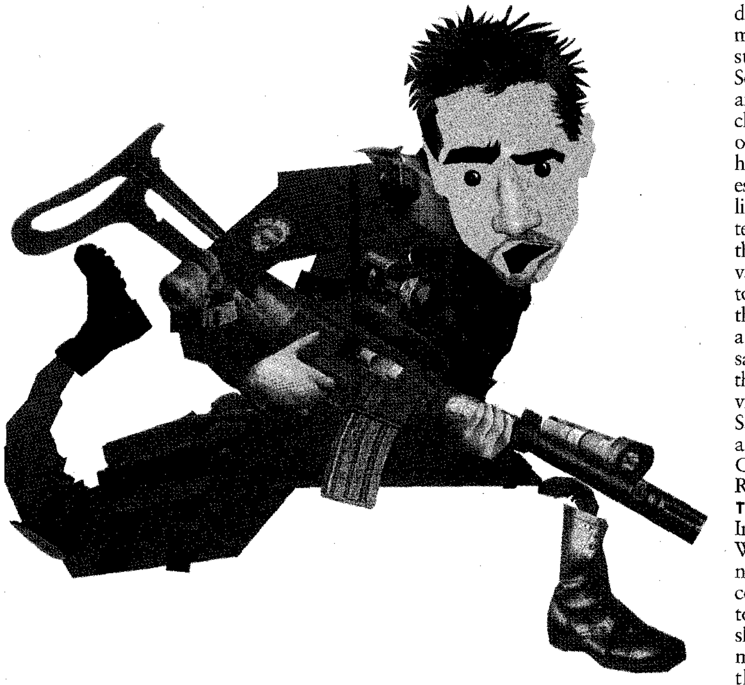
FILM NOTES

BUFFALO SOLDIERS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, and Lincoln Square.)

DIRTY PRETTY THINGS
The British director Stephen Frears leaves the pop pastures of "High Fidelity" behind and delivers a difficult and resolute movie about illegal immigrants in London. The story has all the elements of film noir—a black marketeer, dingy apartments, prostitution—but the frame is suffused with a harsh, hospital-white light. Frears and his screenwriter Steve Knight sidestep the standard benchmarks of the immigrant story by shaping their material as a moral thriller. The actor Chiwetel Ejiofor delivers a brilliant performance as Okwe, a Nigerian man who gets involved with some bloody subterfuge at the posh hotel where he works. Audrey Tautou, the über-gamine, is less convincing as a Turkish runaway, but she's still likable, and Frears tips the action into motion so gracefully that you almost don't notice the characters' fates aligning against each other. He also doesn't flinch from the portrayal of some ugly moments; the somewhat pat romantic justice of the ending comes as a welcome relief. The movie is wrenching, but in a good way.—*Michael Agger* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema 2, Lincoln Square, and Sunshine Cinema.)

HOTEL
Mike Figgis continues to push the limits of digital filmmaking techniques, but this movie, a satirical look at a group of Dogme filmmakers in Venice, drags on the screen. The cast, which includes Rhys Ifans and David Schwimmer, never really develop a rhythm in their semi-improvised scenes. As in his previous movie "Timecode," Figgis uses low lighting and split screens to create an ambitious, postmodern narrative structure. The sexy, fractured storytelling sets up some fascinating parallels, but the film lacks the dark humor that would have leavened its own self-importance.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center.)

THE HOUSEKEEPER
A pretty and pliant young woman (Émilie Dequenne) signs on as a housekeeper with a dyspeptic middle-aged Parisian sound engineer (Jean-Pierre Bacri) whose wife has left him; she not only takes over her employer's mop and broom, she takes over his bed. Claude Berri's film, from a novel by Christian Oster, is a study in limited consciousness. The man, we realize, is a bit of a sourpuss, the girl rather bovine and undiscriminating. But when they move to the coast of Brittany for a vacation, she becomes a lot less pliant. Berri keeps the story small-scaled, tart, and closely observed. The movie doesn't have the emotional range or the cruelty of a work of art, but everything in it feels right. In French.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 7/28/03.) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)



Colin Farrell in "S.W.A.T.," opening August 8.

THE MAGDALENE SISTERS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village Theatre VII.)

MASKED AND ANONYMOUS
Bob Dylan's first foray into film in fifteen years should be considered his first film in almost thirty: the mid-eighties abomination "Hearts of Fire" isn't good for much more than a punch line. "Masked and Anonymous," directed by the "Seinfeld" vet Larry Charles and probably written largely by Dylan himself (the credited scriptwriters seem to be pseudonyms) takes place in a near-future America torn apart by revolution; Jack Fate (Dylan) is a washed-up rock star who gets roped into a benefit concert by the unscrupulous promoter Uncle Sweetheart (John Goodman). Dylan's most ambitious songs have always been alarmingly overpopulated—think "Desolation Row"—and that spirit suffuses the film, which doesn't skimp on the supporting cast: there's a harried television producer (Jessica Lange), a cynical journalist (Jeff Bridges), a shifty roadie (Luke Wilson), a disreputable politician (Mickey Rourke), an unhinged animal lover (Val Kilmer), and even a mysterious Lady in Red (Angela Bassett). Dylan, with a huge cowboy hat atop his stringbean body, moves through the film stolidly, though he is required to cry at one point. Whenever there's a slack moment in the political allegory, which is a kind of crazy quilt of Shakespeare, Gabriel García Márquez, and "Putney Swope," the soundtrack—split between fierce performances by Dylan's crack touring band and world-music covers of Dylan standards—redeems it. And though the plot, such as it is, unravels toward the end, the movie holds its own as part of the Dylan canon: it's knowing without always being knowledgeable, darkly humorous, full of wisdom both faux and real, and genuinely mysterious.—*Ben Greenman* (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

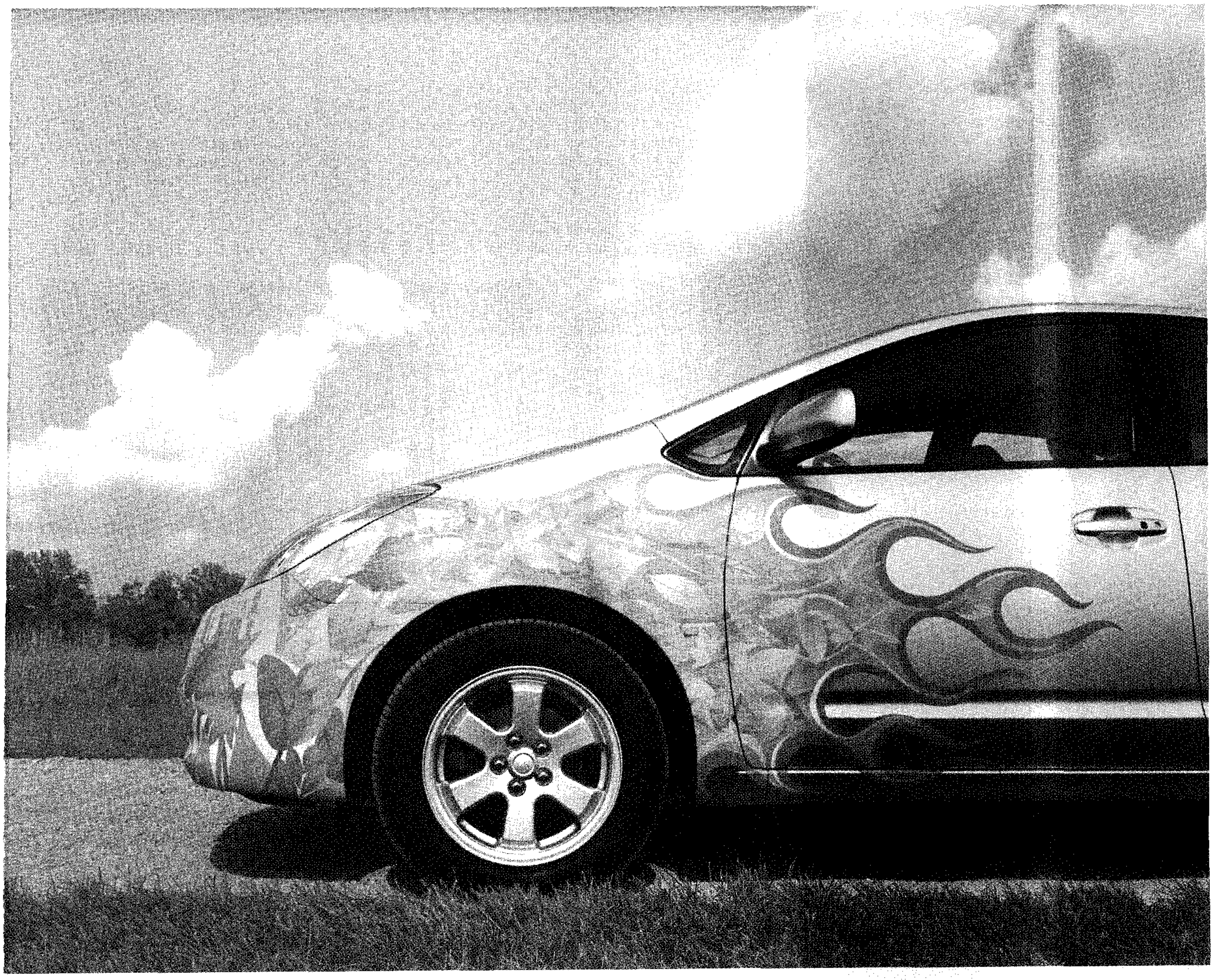
MONDAYS IN THE SUN
The magnificent Javier Bardem stars in this film about a group of unemployed friends and the laconic lives they lead in northern Spain. There's a broken spirit to this movie that the actor taps into—he's heavy and slack and bitterly humorous. The director Fernando León de Aranoa conveys the texture of slow-motion existence, and the cast around Bardem inhabit their idle fates with an affecting ease. In Spanish.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center, New York Twin, and Village East Cinemas.)

MY FAVORITE BRUNETTE
In this baggy-pants satire of private-eye movies and thrillers from "The Maltese Falcon" to "Notorious," Bob Hope, in his 1947 prime, plays a San Francisco baby photographer and would-be detective. Lured by a woman of mystery (Dorothy Lamour), he stumbles onto a plot involving South American uranium deposits and a group of shady characters including Peter Lorre. To put this one over, Hope exploits every weapon in his arsenal of modulated mugging—especially his trademark rapid delivery at all ranges of his vocal register, from under the breath to top of the lungs. Combined with Hope's vaudevillian virtuosity, the stream of topical or absurd wisecracks gives this film the ticklish, airy delight of a sustained comedy-club improvisation. Directed by Elliott Nugent, the movie also boasts rare period views of California from Carmel to San Francisco and surprise appearances from Alan Ladd and Bing Crosby.—*Michael Sragow* (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 10-11.)

THE PALEFACE
In Bob Hope's smash 1948 parody Western, he plays Painless Potter, a novice travelling dentist who becomes the hilarious unwitting foil to Calamity Jane (Jane Russell) as she sabotages a plot to sell dynamite to Indians. Hope introduces the film's infectious Academy Award-winning song, "Buttons and Bows," and breathes frantic life into a couple of classic scenes: a funny-gas tooth-pulling fiasco and a long, mumbling walk up to a short, unpretty shootout. Despite the period trappings, the humor is often quick and ribald—when Calamity, disguised as a proper lady, complains about her dress's whalebone stays, Painless quips, "Call me Moby Dick." And the film's defining gags are equally visual and verbal, even if, as James Agee famously complained, they lack the solid architecture or ripping finish of similar silent-comedy routines. The fall-guy Indians disturb today's audiences, but the movie burlesques them as generic movie redskins, not real people, which makes it easier to enjoy such ruthless developments as Painless killing one behind his back, without looking.—*M.S.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 9-10 and Aug. 12.)

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL
As the deposed pirate captain Jack Sparrow, Johnny Depp does not so much walk as sashay into a scene, and he wears more eyeshadow than Tammy Faye Bakker. He gives this exuberant family entertain-

STEPHEN KRONINGER



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TODAY TOMORROW TOYOTA

ment an amiable sheen of silliness (the performance offers diverse echoes of W. C. Fields, Toshiro Mifune, and Keith Richards on a bender). Depp leaves a lot of the duelling and all of the lovemaking to Orlando Bloom (from "The Lord of the Rings"), who plays a young blacksmith with pirate blood in his veins, a fellow much loved by the daughter of the British governor of a Caribbean colony, Keira Knightley (she has a thing for swashbucklers). The movie is based on the famous old Disneyland ride, and it's good, cheesy fun, complete with tall ships, battles at sea, and accursed pirates who turn into skeletons at night. As Barbossa, the pirate who deposed Captain Jack, Geoffrey Rush eyeballs his victims and stretches out his syllables in the taunting manner of Robert Newton, who specialized in stump-legged scoundrels fifty years ago.—*D.D.* (7/28/03) (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SEABISCUIT
Gary Ross's adaptation of Laura Hillenbrand's 2001 best-seller about the miraculous racehorse of the nineteen-thirties has been shaped as a national epic—not as a good story but as *the* good story. The horse, knobby-kneed and perverse, comes from behind and knocks off the more famous Thoroughbreds of the era. He is saved from obscurity by an unlikely trio: Charles Howard (Jeff Bridges), a millionaire auto salesman with a venturesome streak; Tom Smith (Chris Cooper), a down-and-out trainer, practically a relic of the nineteenth century; and Johnny (Red) Pollard (Tobey Maguire), an embittered, not terribly talented boxer and jockey. The horse becomes such a popular favorite that, as Hillenbrand and Ross tell it, he redeems the millions of unemployed "forgotten men" in the Depression. In case we don't get the point, there are solemn interludes of photomontage accompanied by narration from the historian David McCullough. The Oscar-hungry movie stamps itself with a seal of approval rather than simply telling its story. Much of it, however, is beautifully made in conservative-humanist style, and the races are thrilling. With William H. Macy in a great bit as a poetizing radio announcer.—*D.D.* (8/4/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Beekman, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

STEP INTO LIQUID
A clever name for a classic surfing documentary. Dana Brown's movie has the exotic locations, breezy narration, uplifting stories, and cracked surfer wisdom you expect from the genre. What sets the movie apart is the astonishing sequence that ends it, in which a team of surfers use Jet Skis to catch the sixty-foot waves they find in the middle of the ocean. Other notable interludes include the guys who surf the freezing, muddy waters of Lake Michigan and the professional women surfers who test their mettle at Tahiti's Teahupo'o, dubbed "the wave with teeth" because it breaks over a shallow coral reef.—*M.A.* (Sunshine Cinema.)

SWIMMING POOL
Charlotte Rampling gives another outstanding performance, this time as an uptight mystery writer who accepts an offer from her publisher to use his house in the South of France for some inspiration. When his sexy daughter (the luscious Ludivine Sagnier) shows up uninvited, a slow-burning and deliberately abstract mystery is set in motion. The director François Ozon (who's worked with Rampling before, in the very similar "Under the Sand") crafts a seductive puzzle that may have audiences wondering, in a pleasant way, what it was that they have just seen. In French and English.—*B.D.* (East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES
"Ah'll be beck," Arnold Schwarzenegger said in the first "Terminator" picture, in 1984, and Schwarzenegger is not a man to renege on his promises. In fact, as you watch him clamber into the old black leathers for the third time and cock his weapon of choice, you could be excused for feeling that he's never been away. This latest and stalest installment of the "Terminator" saga is directed not by James Cameron, the father of the franchise, but by Jonathan Mostow; he does a dogged job, and you can see where the money went (a hundred and seventy million dollars, apparently), but in the process, the lurking threat of the earlier movies has been squeezed out. One mystery remains: was it commercial good sense, or mere cynicism, to have the plot of Mostow's film so gleefully replicate that of "Terminator 2: Judgement Day"? The new nemesis is a gleaming female cyborg named T-X (Kristanna Loken), who spurns all emotion save for a sudden, violent attraction to a giant magnet. Meanwhile, the fate of the world rests in the hands of a young couple (Claire Danes and Nick Stahl), who seem understandably peeved at the responsibility. As for the machines of the subtitle, to what position, exactly, have they risen? Are they running the studio?—*Anthony Lane* (7/14 & 21/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

Julie Lopes-Curval's drama "Seaside" opens at Film Forum on August 6.

28 DAYS LATER
Another helpful development for the British Tourist Board. Danny Boyle's horror film, alternately savage and glum, shows London—and, by implication, most of England—destroyed by a fast-acting plague. Borne in the blood, it passes from one Brit to another with a single bite; soon, the capital is empty save for marauding zombies, leaving the unchewed—such as Jim (Cillian Murphy) and Selena (Naomie Harris)—to drift around, shop without paying, and never quite have sex. Any resemblance to normal teen-age behavior is entirely coincidental. Brendan Gleeson, much the best and cheeriest thing in the movie, plays a taxi-driver who helps them to leave town; from here on, Boyle and his screenwriter, Alex Garland, run out of gas. The picture is twitchy and annoying, flecked with blood and half-digested ideas, and too much is left unexplained. As a scheme for solving central London's traffic problem, though, it is unlikely to be surpassed.—*A.L.* (6/30/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

AMERICAN WEDDING
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

CAMP
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.

FINDING NEMO (6/9/03)
Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.

THE SECRET LIVES OF DENTISTS
Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and 72nd Street East.

SPELLBOUND
Empire 25, New York Twin, and Quad Cinema.

SPY KIDS 3-D: GAME OVER
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, and 34th Street Theatre.

WINGED MIGRATION
Paris, Union Square, and Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.

Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 7: "Eyes Wide Open: The Evolution of Widescreen Cinema." Aug. 9-10 at 2: "Lawrence of Arabia" (1962, David Lean). ♦ Repertory nights. Aug. 9-10 at 6:30: "The Wild Bunch" (1969, Sam Peckinpah).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Through Aug. 29: "The Return of Kurosawa and Mifune." All films are in Japanese. Aug. 6-7 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "I Live in Fear" (1955). ♦ Aug. 8-9 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Throne of Blood" (1957). ♦ Aug. 10-11 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Yojimbo" (1961). ♦ Aug. 12 at 4:30, 7, and 9:20: "Stray Dog" (1946).

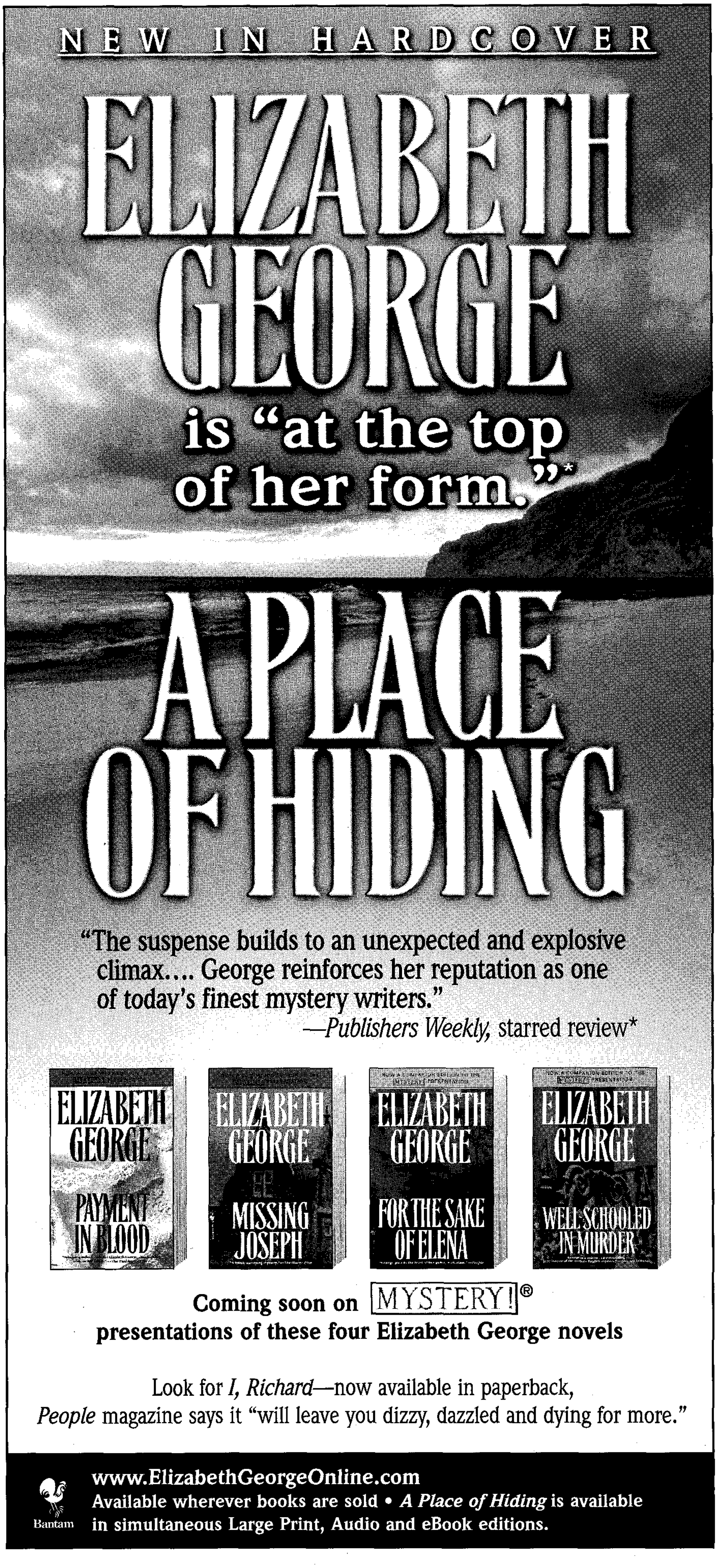
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Aug. 6-7 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:50, and 10: "Sunset Boulevard" (1950, Billy Wilder). ♦ Aug. 8-12 at 1:20, 3:50, 6:30, and 9:10: "Chinatown" (1974, Roman Polanski).

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through Aug. 17: A Dorothy Arzner retrospective. Aug. 7 at 4: "The Wild Party" (1929). ♦ Aug. 7 at 6: "Dance, Girl, Dance" (1940). ♦ Aug. 8 at 6: "Nana" (1934). ♦ Aug. 8 at 8: "Craig's Wife" (1936). ♦ Aug. 9 and Aug. 11 at 6: "Get Your Man" (1927). ♦ Aug. 9 at 8: "Merrily We Go to Hell" (1932). ♦ Aug. 10 at 2: "Working Girls" (1931). ♦ Aug. 10 at 4: "Christopher Strong" (1933). ♦ Aug. 10 at 6: "The Bride Wore Red" (1937). ♦ Aug. 11 at 8: "Honor Among Lovers" (1931). ♦ Summer repertory classics. Aug. 7 at 8 and Aug. 8 at 4: "Imitation of Christ" (1967-70, Andy Warhol). ♦ Aug. 8 at 2: "The Purple Rose of Cairo" (1985, Woody Allen). ♦ Aug. 9 at 1: "The Age of Innocence" (1993, Martin Scorsese). ♦ Aug. 9 at 4: "The Killing" (1956, Stanley Kubrick).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. Aug. 8-9: "Run Lola Run" (1998, Tom Tykwer; in German).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through Aug. 31: "Classic Thalia from the Kino International Collection." Aug. 8 at 6:30 and Aug. 9 at 1:30: "The Mirror" (1975, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ Aug. 8 at 8:30 and Aug. 9 at 3:30: "The Sacrifice" (1986, Tarkovsky; in English and Swedish). ♦ Aug. 9 at 7 and Aug. 10 at 2: "Paris 1900" (1946, Nicole Verdes). ♦ Aug. 9 at 8:30 and Aug. 10 at 3:30: "Time Regained" (1999, Raoul Ruiz; in French). ♦ Aug. 10 at 7: "Nosferatu" (1921, F. W. Murnau). ♦ Aug. 10 at 8:45: "Eyes Without a Face" (1959, Georges Franju; in French).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Aug. 7: "Man in the Shadows: The Films of Alain Delon." Aug. 6 at 4 and Aug. 7 at 6:30: "The Fighter" (1983, Delon; in French). ♦ Aug. 7 at 4 and 9: "The Lost Command" (1966, Mark Robson). ♦ Starting Aug. 8: A tribute to Bob Hope. Aug. 8 at 5 and 9:30 and Aug. 9 at 1: "Road to Singapore" (1940, Victor Schertzinger). ♦ Aug. 8 at 7, Aug. 9 at 3, and Aug. 11 at 1 and 5: "Road to Morocco" (1942, David Butler). ♦ Aug. 9 at 5 and Aug. 10 and Aug. 12 at 1: "The Paleface" (†). ♦ Aug. 9 at 7 and Aug. 10 and Aug. 12 at 3: "Son of Paleface" (1952, Frank Tashlin). ♦ Aug. 9 at 9 and Aug. 12 at 5 and 9: "The Cat and the Canary" (1939, Elliott Nugent). ♦ Aug. 10 at 5 and 9 and Aug. 11 at 3: "My Favorite Blonde" (1942, Sidney Lanfield). ♦ Aug. 10-11 at 7: "My Favorite Brunette" (†). ♦ Aug. 11 at 9 and Aug. 12 at 7: "Road to Utopia" (1945, Hal Walker).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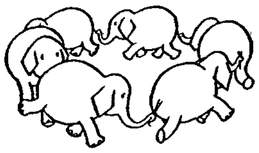
THE
NEW YORKER

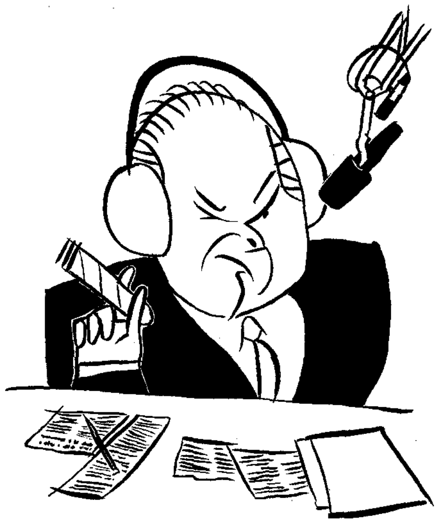
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
RADIO DAZE



New York City is the home base of Fox News, *National Review*, and "The Rush Limbaugh Show." We're in our tenth straight year under Republican mayors. And we're the world headquarters of heartless, rapacious, crush-the-workers Finance Capitalism. But none of that makes our town Nirvana for conservatives. Politically, we're blue through and through. Al Gore's margin over George W. Bush here was four to one, and the city's congressional delegation consists of twelve Democrats and one Republican. New York has its share of paleocons and more than its share of neocons (neoconservatism having been invented on the Upper West Side, circa 1968), but what we mostly have is non-cons—that is, nonconservatives. We even have liberals.

You'd be hard put to notice that, though, from listening to the radio. As in the rest of the country, political talk radio here is dominated by the hard right. On the AM band, whose low-fidelity signal is perfect for shrill jabber, no fewer than four powerful stations feature "conservative talk." Two of them, WMCA and WWDJ, are "Christian" and heavily salted with attacks on homosexuality, abortion rights, and stem-cell research and support for school prayer, President Bush's judicial nominees, and Israeli maximalism. The other two pump out a steadier flow of viscous, untreated political sewage. WOR carries four hours daily of Bob Grant and Bill O'Reilly, reliable voices of irritable reaction. The biggie is WABC, which claims the largest talk-radio audience in the country. The station features fifteen hours a week of Limbaugh, fifteen of Sean Hannity, and ten of Mark Levin ("one of America's preëminent conservative commentators"). It recently dropped the malignant ranter Michael Savage, not because he told a "sodomite" caller, "You should only get AIDS and die, you pig"—that happened a little later, on Savage's short-lived MSNBC cable-television show—but over a contract dispute. (Savage's photograph remains on the home page of the WABC Web site, like Banquo's ghost.) As its call letters indicate, WABC carries the respectable imprimatur of the American Broadcasting Company, which owns it and provides its hourly newscasts, and, by extension, of ABC's parent company, Disney.



A generation ago, when WABC was New York's No. 1 Top Forty rock station, talk radio, here and elsewhere, was both smaller and more varied. In 1980, only seventy-five stations in the United States used the all-talk format, and most of them were politically anodyne. Conservative hosts were novelty items. Now there are more than thirteen hundred talk stations, the vast majority of which are relentlessly right-wing. New York, like a few other big coastal cities, has a squeaky voice or two on the marginal left. WBAI broadcasts Chomskian harangues, and WLIB, which carries mostly Caribbean pop music, dips an occasional toe into protest politics. On the whole, though, the New York lineup mirrors the far right's near-monopoly on political broadcasting nationwide. There is no real liberal or even just noncon counterpart to the radiocons, as we might as well call them. On (mostly) the FM dial, National Public Radio is an alternative but not an equivalent. NPR's "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered," like "The Rush Limbaugh Show," are carried on some six hundred stations, and their audience is roughly the size of El Rushbo's—somewhere around fifteen million people per week. But these NPR programs are news-feature broadcasts; they adhere to the practices of journalistic professionalism, including the aspirational ideal of

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

objectivity. Their sensibility may fairly be said to be "liberal" in the sense that liberal education is liberal—that is, open-minded and urbane, with a preference for empirical inquiry over dogmatic conclusion-mongering—but what little overt political commentary they offer hovers around the moderate middle. NPR's local talk-show hosts tend to be more overtly liberal, but they are always polite about it. In contrast, Limbaugh and his scores of national and local imitators aggressively propagandize on behalf of the conservative wing of the Republican Party and the domestic and foreign policies of the Bush Administration, with a stream of faxes and e-mails from conservative think tanks and the Republican National Committee keeping the troops firmly on message. Neither NPR nor anyone else ever performed any such services for the Clinton Administration, and no one is doing so today on behalf of the beleaguered Democratic opposition.

Anita and Sheldon Drobny, a couple of Chicago venture capitalists, have set out to do something about this. They have formed a company, AnShell Media, have pledged ten million of their own dollars to it, and are spending the summer trying to raise more money and assemble a fourteen-hour-a-day package of liberal talk radio and a national network of stations to carry it. It won't be easy to get this act together, and it'll be even harder to give it legs once it's on the air. The main obstacle, probably, is neither financial nor ideological but temperamental. Remember the old joke about politics being show business for ugly people? Well, right-wing radio is niche entertainment for the spiritually unattractive. It succeeds because a substantial segment of the right-wing rank and file enjoys listening, hour after hour, as smug, angry, disdainful middle-aged men spew raw contempt at reified enemies, named and unnamed. The radiocons seldom offer analysis or argument. To the chronically resentful, they offer the sadistic consolation of an endless sneer—at weaklings, victim-group whiners, cultural snobs, Hollywood hypocrites whose hearts bleed for the downtrodden though they themselves are rich and privileged, feminists, environmentalists, and, of course, "liberals," defined as the Clintons, other members of the "Democrat Party," and persons suspected of thinking that the state ought to help correct for various kinds of unfairnesses or calamities (economic, racial, climatic, medical) or of attaching themselves to some identity other than or in addition to "American" (black, gay, foreign, all humanity).

By contrast, most noncons—most people, for that matter—do not regard politics as entertainment. They regard it as politics. They wouldn't think it was fun to listen to expressions of raw contempt for conservatives—oh, maybe for a little while now and then, just as some occasionally tune in Limbaugh to give themselves a masochistic thrill or to raise their blood pressure, but not long and often enough to sustain an industry. When they want to be entertained, they watch comedy or drama. For the radiocon audience, political hate talk *is* comedy and drama. To their ears, it's music.

The radiolibs at AnShell Media are aware that previous attempts at liberal radio have been undone by dull earnestness. At the same time, they know that anger and abuse will not win them the audience they seek. Accordingly, they plan to rely heavily, they say, on "comedy and political satire." As their headliner, they are trying to recruit Al Franken, the "Saturday Night Live" star and the author of such works of political science as "Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot" and the forthcoming "Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them: A Fair and Balanced Look at the Right." Good luck to them. God knows they'll need it. They should only break a leg.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

LEADERS OF TOMORROW
SALAAM NEW YORK

Not a lot usually gets accomplished when future Prime Ministers meet with former Presidents, but there they were, Omer Chaudhary and Akbar Ansari, up-and-comers from Pakistan and India (respectively), being ushered unexpectedly into the Harlem office of Bill Clinton. They had just enough time to let him know that they'd devised a plan for establishing peace between their two nations, but not nearly enough time to spell out what the plan was. "I see future hope between you two," Clinton said, beaming. There were handshakes and hearty laughs and a few camera flashes, and then it was over.

Omer, a keen, lanky economics student from Lahore, and Akbar, a garrulous, barrel-chested zoology student from Bombay, were part of a group of twenty-one college-age South Asian Muslims who have spent the past month at Washington College, in Chestertown, Maryland, in an American Studies program sponsored by the State Department. The U.S. Embassies in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh had picked seven outstanding students—four women, three men—from each country, out of hundreds of applicants, and flown them over for an immersion in the American way of life (small-town variety): rigorous study, Dunkin' Donuts, Single-A ball.

The other day, the group bused up to New York for a two-day field trip. The program's director, Ted Widmer, a history professor and former Clinton speechwriter who is helping Clinton with his memoirs, wanted his charges to see, as he told them, "a typical government office building." He took them up to 55 West 125th Street, making no mention of the building's most prominent occupant. So it was a genuine surprise when a door opened and Clinton came forward to greet them. "Am I watching television?" Wajiha Tahar Ali, a tall woman from Hyderabad, asked herself.

Afterward, the students—the men in dark suits, the women in colorful shalwar kameez—gathered on the sidewalk and shared their impressions, as everyone photographed everyone.

"What a pleasant surprise!"

"For Clinton, I would have expected a huge lawn."

"It is a shock to see a former President, a white President, having an office in a black area."

"He was very humble."

"In India he has a very good image."

"He's a scholar."

"A stud!"

"A stud muffin!"

In general, the students' enthusiasm for Clinton was equalled by their disdain for George W. Bush. "Bush will not be reëlected," Akbar predicted.

Out on the sidewalk, Omer and Akbar stuck together. They made a funny pair: Akbar is broad and dark-skinned, with a center part in his hair and a big zirconium ring on his right ring finger, the band of which had been bent some years ago when he slugged a menacing fellow-passenger on a train in Bombay. Omer looks a little like Jerzy Kosinski. On this trip, they had become best friends, despite the differences between their two countries—differences that both had honestly believed, until very recently, were severe enough to preclude personal friendship. And they were serious about this business of being Prime Ministers one day. "Why not?" Omer said.

"In these few weeks, we have sorted out the problems of the last fifty-five years," Akbar said.

A call for lunch postponed further talk of diplomacy. On to Sylvia's for soul food. As the students funnelled into the restaurant, they enumerated the many things they have come to admire about America. Freedom. Friendly people. Big bridges. "The best thing," Akbar said, "is that people obey traffic rules." And Jim Carrey: "The best comedian, I think so." And "Dr. Strangelove," which they had recently gone to see: "The best scene is the one in which the two Presidents have the talk." One fellow did a passable Peter Sellers imitation—"Dmitri, Dmitri"—and there was laughter all around.

For the most part, American food had been disappointing. So much corn, so few spices. At Sylvia's, the students ate corn bread with their forks, and, as the portions of fried chicken and sassy beef arrived, declared this the best meal they'd had. "The first enjoyable food," Akbar said.

After lunch, Widmer led them on foot down Malcolm X Boulevard and into Central Park, on their way to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to see the ancient Mesopotamian exhibit there. It was a long, humid walk, in a light drizzle, but they submitted to it cheerfully. The group spread out, dissolving into pairs, some of which could even be called couples (they shall go nameless).

At the Met exhibit, a giant map of the ancient world, from the Aegean to the Indus, covered an entire wall, with the borders of modern nations superimposed on it. The stretch of border between India and Pakistan in Kashmir was represented by a dotted line. Omer and Akbar stood before it and laid out their plan.

"A plebiscite," Omer said.

"We will allow the people of Kashmir to decide," Akbar explained. "They can vote to be with India, to be with Pakistan, or to be independent. And if another country tries to invade, Pakistan and India must agree to defend Kashmir."

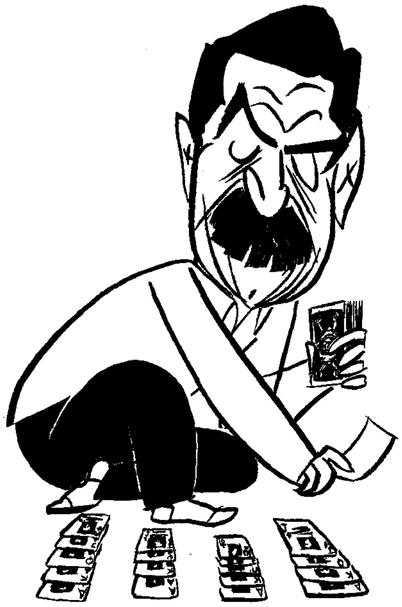
Other students ambled over and began raising objections. Arguments took shape, women disagreeing with men. A hot debate broke out over whether a Muslim could ever be Prime Minister of India. President, maybe, but never Prime Minister, though of course there was no law against it. But Akbar was adamant. The volume rose.

"Sh-h-h!" It was an older American woman with a perm, a pocketbook, and a convincing scowl. "This is a museum," she whispered loudly. "Other people are trying to enjoy the exhibit." The students smiled and dispersed.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

TWO-OF-A-KIND DEPT.
WAR GAME

With the recent deaths of the Baath Party's prodigal sons, Uday and Qusay Hussein, the number of active cards in the CENTCOM-issued Iraqi "most wanted" decks has dwindled to sixteen; those with familiar names on them number just two—Saddam and Ali Hassan al-Majid, a.k.a. Chemical Ali. Not a four-of-a-kind remains intact, nor is there a single queen. So, as the search in Iraq narrows for the ace of spades himself, it seems only natural that a rival set of cards should emerge.

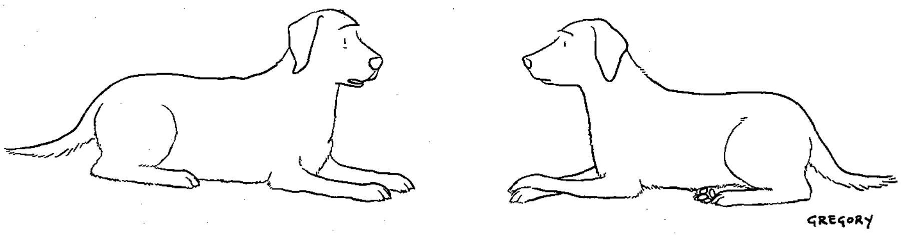


Saddam Hussein

Last week, a complementary geopolitical deck of Bush Cards began circulating in these parts. Instead of the camouflage design recognizable from the backs of the Iraqi edition, the new cards feature a blue-on-white likeness of President Bush, set against a backdrop of small "W"s, missiles, pretzels, and oil rigs. On the flip side, in place of the various mustachioed Revolutionary Command Council ministers, are photos of fifty-two members and friends of the Bush Administration, from George (ace of spades, of course) to Jeb (six of clubs) and on down to Medicare administrator Tom Scully (two of clubs).

Selecting the proper roster took some care, it turns out, and many popular candidates, including Laura Bush and the twins, were ultimately nixed, as Zach Levy, the man behind the Bush Cards, explained the other day. "Barbara and Jenna, as silly and ridiculous as they are, haven't killed as many people as the Hussein kids have," he said. "We didn't want to leave ourselves open to mudslinging." Levy, a native New Yorker with a background in independent media, conceived the idea with his friends Ben Dailey and Ryan Deussing back in May, after President Bush had declared the war in Iraq over. "We spent the previous six months trying to get embedded, but no one would call us back," Levy said. "So this project is the result of that."

The deck, which is now available on the Web for five dollars, was arranged especially with poker in mind, such that it is possible to score big, for instance, with a unique "Enron pair" (Ken Lay, three of clubs, and Thomas White, three of hearts), or with an "environmental flush" (all spades): Christie Todd Whitman, the resigned E.P.A. chief; Gale Norton and J. Steven Griles, of the Department of the Interior; Energy Secretary Spencer (S.U.V.) Abraham; and John D. Graham, the so-called Regulations Czar. But it is also tempting to imagine playing a hand or two of Hearts with the cards, and dumping F.B.I. Director Robert Mueller (eight of spades) on an opponent in an attempt to shoot the moon, from Andrew (Yoda) Marshall, the octogenarian Pentagon strategist (and two of hearts), through King Wolfowitz and Ace Rumsfeld. "With the exception of



"There they were, sitting around the dinner table, knocking off a bottle of Côtes-du-Rhône and blathering about the Middle East—you've never heard such shallow, simplistic reasoning in your life—and one of them turns to me and says, 'And what do you think, Barney? What do you think we should do?' and all I could come up with was 'Woof.' I felt like such an ass."

• •

Ari Fleischer"—a ten—"the hearts are all basically warriors," Levy said.

A couple of card enthusiasts recently decided that, given the existence of both an Iraqi and an American deck, the most appropriate game might in fact be War. One of them armed himself with a set of Bush Cards, the other with CENTCOM's most wanted. At first, it seemed easy enough. Under-Secretary of Defense Douglas J. Feith (nine of hearts) scored an early victory over a Baath Party regional chairman (two of diamonds), but soon Tom Ridge (jack of hearts) got beat by a deputy Army commander (king of clubs). In the first major skirmish—a protracted battle began when the former Ambassador to Switzerland, Mercer Reynolds (two of spades), met the Baath representative from Maysan (two of clubs)—Saddam and Uday Hussein slipped away with an oil minister, untouched, as one of Saddam's nephews (king of hearts) bested Lieutenant-General Jay Garner (four of hearts). John Ashcroft, Richard Perle, and John Negroponte were collateral losses.

The Bush team recovered, with decisive wins by Lewis Libby (king of clubs), Karl Rove (king of spades), and George Tenet (jack of clubs), and, at the conclusion of the first pass through the decks, the Americans appeared to be in good shape. Before long, though, it became difficult to determine who was on which side. One round dragged into the next with no clear resolution in sight. A much hoped for Bush-Saddam showdown never materialized. Meanwhile, a noncombatant who'd been observing the game offered his opinion: "Quagmire."

Levy, for his part, had not anticipated such a use for the Bush Cards. He was more concerned about humorless conservatives. "Hopefully, people will laugh, at least, before they punch us," he said.

After a while, the two warring opponents called a truce and began separating the decks again, so that they might each play solitaire.

—*Ben McGrath*

LOCKDOWN LIT
THROW THE BOOKS AT HIM

Schuylkill, the correctional facility in Pennsylvania, is the kind of place that, according to attorneys who try to get their white-collar clients sent there, bears a beguiling resemblance to a college campus: it has sports facilities and a library and a deficit of searchlights and round-the-clock lockdowns. Ever since Sam Waksal, the founder of ImClone and friend of Martha Stewart, arrived there to begin serving a seven-year-and-three-month stint for insider trading, the place has become just that much more studious—at least, if Waksal has started working his way through the books that can be found on his Amazon.com Wish List.

According to the online bookseller (whose Wish List function allows an individual to inform friends, family, and other interested parties of the titles he or she would like to own), Waksal drew up, eight days before his incarceration, a reading list of fifty volumes, made up largely of works whose weightiness would put a MacArthur Fellow to shame. He plans to read not only "A History of the Modern World," by R. R. Palmer, Joel Colton, and Lloyd Kramer, but *the* history of the modern world: "Einstein: His Life and Times," by Phillip Frank; "Darwin: The Life of a Tormented Evolutionist," by Adrian Desmond and James Moore; "The Revolt of the Masses," by José Ortega y Gasset; and "Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question," by Richard J. Bernstein. The ancient world is far from neglected. During Waksal's reading hours—the period between 8:30 P.M., when prisoners are required to repair to their shared cinder-block rooms, and 11:30 P.M., lights-out—he will have the opportunity to familiarize himself with "Alexander the Great," by Robin Lane Fox; Herodotus' "Histories"; "The Romans," edited by Andrea Giardina; and two versions of the Peloponnesian War, by Thucydides and by Donald Kagan, the Yale professor, which together total almost twelve hundred pages.

Amazon.com indicates that the books are to be shipped to Minersville, Pennsylvania, the town in which Schuylkill prison is situated, and to which Waksal was driven on July 23rd, when he told reporters, "I deeply regret the mistakes I've made that have brought me here today, and I'm ready to pay for those mistakes." Inside, he will at least have the consolations of philosophy. His book pile includes the selected letters of Friedrich Nietzsche; "On Tyranny," by Leo Strauss; and three books by Walter Benjamin, including Volumes III and IV of the selected writings, but not Volumes I and II—well-thumbed copies of which, perhaps, Waksal left behind at the SoHo loft where he kept his art collection and gave his celebrated parties.

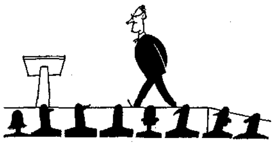
Waksal has gone long in Judaica: "Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature III," edited by Isadore Twersky and Jay M. Harris; "Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism," by Robert Chazan; "Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Ancient World," by Peter Schäfer; "A People Apart: A Political History of the Jews in Europe 1789-1939," by David Vital; and "The Legends of the Jews, Notes for Volumes Three and Four: From Moses to Esther," by Louis Ginzberg. For spiritual enrichment, Waksal can turn to one of four Cabala commentaries by Gershom Scholem. (Waksal may have been exhibiting rabbinical interests as early as July of 2002; a Wish List compiled at that time by a Samuel Waksal requested seven volumes of Steinsaltz's translation and interpretation of the Talmud. A Wish List attributed to "Waksal," in "New York, New York," which was entered on December 8, 2001—a little more than two weeks before Waksal and Martha Stewart sold off their ImClone stock in advance of the F.D.A.'s rejection of Erbitux, the company's cancer drug—reveals a reader with a distinctly different bent: the one volume on the list is "Vanity Fair's Hollywood.")

Waksal has not indulged himself with the standard books that one has always wanted to get around to reading properly but never had the time for; there is no Proust, no Gibbon, no "Clarissa." He has requested "Ulysses Annotated," Don Gifford's compendium of Joyce's allusions, and is presumably banking on an earlier inmate's having left behind a copy of the text itself. Waksal isn't, apparently, much of a novel reader, though he has included Goethe's "Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers," in German, and, less ambitiously, Dan Brown's best-seller "The Da Vinci Code."

Well-wishers hoping to contribute to Waksal's groaning bookshelf are mostly out of luck; of the fifty volumes requested, all but three have been bought, maybe as parting gifts from the likes of Lorraine Bracco and Frederic Fekkai, both of whom attended Waksal's farewell bash, at which the host handed out, as party favors, prized bottles from his cellar. The three outstanding items (the correspondence of Gershom Scholem and Walter Benjamin, "Memoirs of Hadrian," by Marguerite Yourcenar, and "From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto, Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics," by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi) are all listed as unavailable. Unfortunately, Waksal will be unable to update his Wish List personally, since one of the ways in which Schuylkill is not like a college campus is that Internet access is forbidden. However, Amazon's taste-analyzing software does provide an alternative for anyone wishing to contribute to Waksal's self-education as he pays his debt to society: Delmore Schwartz's "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities."

—*Rebecca Mead*

MASTER CLASS
WILDING



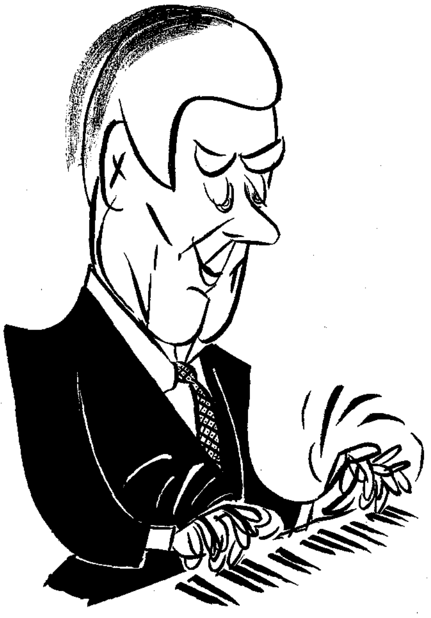
When the eighty-seven-year-old American pianist Earl Wild gave a recital the other day at the Mannes College of Music, on West Eighty-fifth Street, as part of a piano festival, he walked onto the stage with the aspect of a man who has earned the right to misbehave a little. Tall, with glowing white hair, he affected bashful surprise when applauded, and thoroughly seduced his audience before he even sat at the piano.

Wild is famous for his dazzling technique and also for his unusual repertoire choices—he was nominated for a Grammy this year for the first ever recording of a series of piano miniatures by Reynaldo Hahn, a composer best known for being a friend of Proust. If the years had brought a slight stiffness to the shoulders, Wild's fingerwork remained unimpaired, and he seemed, when playing, to have the hands of a fifty-year-old. As an encore, he played a transcription of the "Mexican Hat Dance," which he recently composed. The piece, silly but ingenious, drew gasps and laughter in equal measure.

In an onstage interview after the concert, Wild was asked about "the issue of longevity," and got a big laugh straight off with his mock-indignant expression. "The sad thing about being as old as I am is that so many colleagues are dead," he said. "You miss the old bitchery." (There was, however, some contemporary bitchery, with Wild complaining about the "Brendelization" of piano playing today and calling Lang Lang, a highly publicized young player, "the J. Lo of the piano.") Many questions focussed on Wild's tendency to make slight alterations to the pieces he plays. Asked what he thought about fidelity to the score, he said, "Fidelity is such an ugly word."

The next day, Wild returned to the Mannes stage for a four-hour-long master class, looking relaxed in a blue shirt, with a thick gold chain and a turquoise belt buckle. All the students who played for him were highly accomplished, though not all, perhaps, were attuned to his sense of humor. Wild's advice was simple and sensible: economy of motion ("Stay closer to the keyboard; when you get older it's safer") and a steady beat ("You don't want to push and pull like Martha Argerich, who can't play eight bars in the same tempo"). He is against pianists who express concentration by leaning their heads back with their eyes closed: "When you give a recital, God doesn't help you." (Wild claims to be an atheist largely for musical reasons, having at age ten asked his mother how there could be a God when the organist at their local church in Pittsburgh was so lousy.)

Wild tested the shier students. "Passionate and quiet," he said of a thin Japanese woman's passage of Rachmaninoff. "It's like a good lover. They never scream in your ear." (This elicited a nervous half laugh.) He added, "A good lover always holds back, has something left." With another pupil, he stood at the curve of the piano, singing and even occasionally dancing to make his points.



Earl Wild

The last student of the afternoon, a wiry young man, played some of Wild's own finger-bogglingly difficult arrangements of Gershwin songs, eagerly quizzing Wild on particular problems. How to accent the melody here without slowing the insane tempo? (Answer: Play lighter and don't consciously reach for the awkward notes.) And how about this knotty passage of repeated notes? Wild peered at the score and shrugged. He said, "That's just hard."

—*Leo Carey*

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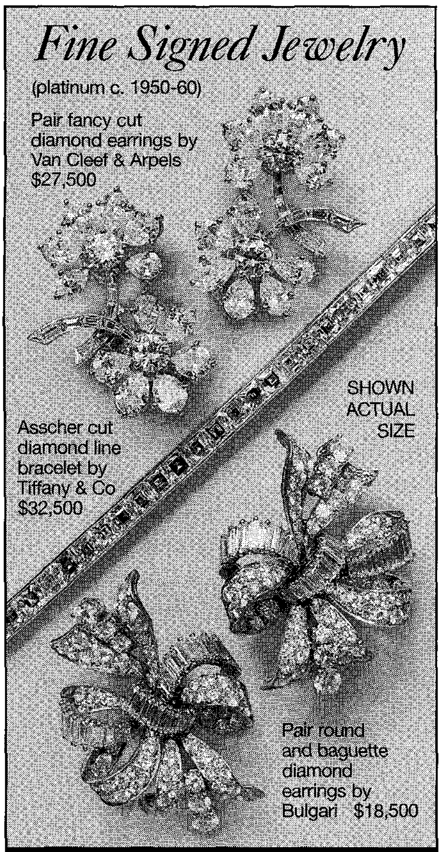
(platinum c. 1950-60)



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ANNALS OF MEDICINE

SICK WITH WORRY

Can hypochondria be cured?

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

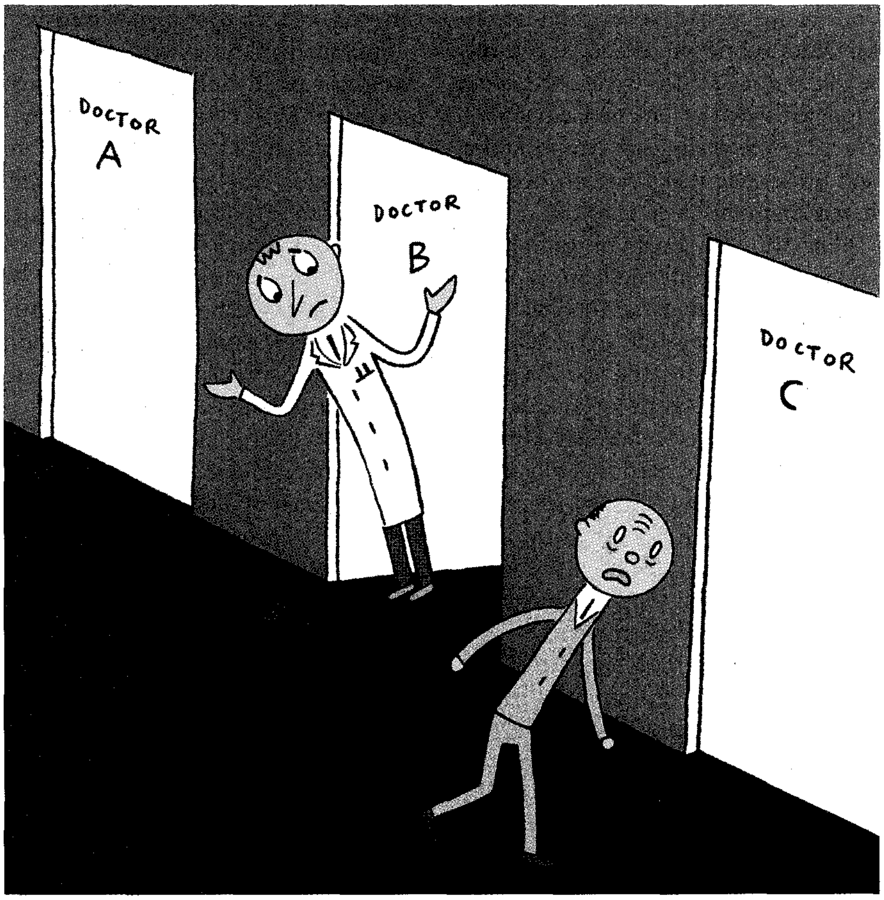
Amanda was sure that she had contracted leukemia, developed a brain tumor, and had a stroke—all around the same time. She made this self-diagnosis while experiencing intermittent discomfort in her abdomen and feeling a persistent wooziness in her head. She often felt off balance, as if she were walking on a warped floor. "I was also really worried about my spleen," she told me in a recent conversation. (Amanda is not her real name.) For almost a year, she had sought explanations for her various complaints, discussing her symptoms with twenty physicians in her H.M.O. All of them told her that they could find nothing wrong. These doctors spent little time with her, and none offered a follow-up appointment, although they readily referred her to other physicians.

With growing frustration, Amanda visited more specialists, undergoing physical examinations, blood tests, and sonograms. Nothing abnormal was found, but with each test she became more convinced that she was seriously ill. She kept looking for a doctor who would tell her, unequivocally, that her symptoms could not possibly indicate a fatal sickness. When doctors couldn't give her absolute assurance, she concluded that something terrible must be wrong with her. I asked Amanda, a petite woman with a lightly freckled face, why she thought doctors kept referring her to others. She was perplexed by the question. "We live in a litigious society," she said. "Maybe they were afraid of lawsuits, if they missed something." She paused. "Maybe they were confused by what was wrong with me."

Amanda, who is thirty-three years old and teaches theatre arts at a West Coast college, has suffered from medical anxieties many times before. Several years ago, she was in a travelling theatrical group for children, and played a role that required her to wear an elephant costume for more than a hundred days in a row. After a long day spent in rehearsal and onstage, she often felt exhausted and queasy. Most people would attribute these feelings to stress, but she was convinced that her symptoms indicated a dire disease; one day, during a prolonged episode of abdominal pain, she thought she might be dying and, in a panic, asked a colleague to take her to a local hospital. The doctors there failed to detect anything out of order. The next night, she went again, and once more the E.R. physicians sent her home.

Amanda's fears about illness began when she was nine, after she heard that a schoolmate had almost died from a severe case of chicken pox. As a teen-ager, she was terrified each time she had to visit a doctor. "I remember when I was fourteen years old, and I was sitting in biology class and had a doctor's appointment later that day," she said. "I was so scared, I couldn't think." She entered college at the peak of the AIDS epidemic. Though she told me that she "wasn't strongly at risk for H.I.V."—she had few sexual partners and regularly used protection—she became consumed by the idea that she was infected. "I really thought I had the virus," she said. Shortly after graduation, Amanda moved to New York City, where she got a job in a bookstore. "Each day, I checked reference books in the store, and called people about AIDS," she said. "It got so bad that my co-workers tried to keep me away from the health section."

She finally decided to be tested for H.I.V. and, one day, stood for more than an hour in a long line at a New York public-health facility. Part of the free testing procedure involved undergoing a pelvic exam. "I was up in the stirrups," she recalled. "And this horrible doctor I didn't know said to me, 'Oh, my God! There is something definitely wrong with your cervix.' " Her heart started to race, and she asked the physician whether her condition could be related to cancer. He replied that her cervix was inflamed, and that some women with H.I.V. had a similar condition. "I began to cry hysterically," Amanda said. "The doctor looked at me and said I should learn to relax—listen to music or something." Amanda ended up getting two tests for H.I.V., in case one yielded a false result. Both were negative, and the inflammation was benign, but she was so traumatized that she didn't have another gynecological exam for three years.



Doctors, trained to respect patients' concerns, can end up bolstering medical phobias.

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

People like Amanda populate every doctor's waiting room. Studies show that at least a quarter of all patients report symptoms that appear to have no physical basis, and that one in ten continues to believe that he has a terminal disease even after the doctor has found him to be healthy. Experts say that between three and six per cent of patients seen by primary-care physicians suffer from hypochondria, the irrational fear of illness. The number is likely growing, thanks to increased medical reporting in the media, which devotes particular attention to scary new diseases like SARS, and to the Internet, which provides a wealth of clinical information (and misinformation) that can help turn a concerned patient into a neurotic one. Nevertheless, hypochondria is rarely discussed in the doctor's office. The "worried well," as sufferers are sometimes called, typically feel insulted by any suggestion that their symptoms have a psychological basis. Most patients are given a formal diagnosis of hypochondria only after ten or so years of seeing physicians, if they get such a diagnosis at all.

Doctors often dislike their hypochondriac patients; they consume inordinate amounts of time, and strain hospital resources with their interminable complaints. In the United States, it is estimated, twenty billion dollars a year is spent on patients whose psychological distress requires repeated tests and procedures. Many doctors and nurses make fun of hypochondriacs, calling them "crocks" and "turkeys." The favored epithet among interns and residents is GOMER, which stands for Get Out of My Emergency Room. Many doctors are relieved when a hypochondriac leaves them for another physician.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, research on the subject is sketchy. The most recent edition of the "Cecil Textbook of Medicine," a volume of more than two thousand pages that is one of the bibles of internal medicine, includes only two sentences on hypochondria: "Chronic preoccupation with the idea of having a serious disease. The preoccupation is usually poorly amenable to reassurance." The National Institutes of Health currently funds no studies on the topic.

Among the few psychiatrists and primary-care physicians who are interested in the problem, there is little agreement about the reasons for the disorder and what to do about it. Only in recent decades has a working definition of hypochondria been formulated by the American Psychiatric Association: "The fear or belief of serious illness that persists six months or more despite physician reassurance." Conventional medical wisdom holds that hypochondria is a hopeless condition and should be treated by ignoring it, because a hypochondriac's recognition of his problem does not result in a change in his symptoms or in his behavior. Indeed, doctors like to joke that a hypochondriac's symptoms will disappear only when the patient lands on a desert island—and nobody is around to listen to his whining.

The term "hypochondrium" can be found in the writings of Hippocrates. The word originally had an anatomical emphasis—indicating the area under (*hypo*) the cartilage of the ribs (*chondros*)—and referred to digestive disorders of the liver, spleen, and gallbladder. Starting in the seventeenth century, "hypochondria" was used to describe a melancholic disorder that was also marked by indigestion and vague pains. Leeches were the preferred mode of treatment. The diagnosis developed a certain cultural chic, particularly in eighteenth-century England, where it was called "hyp," and an anxious, gloomy temperament was considered a sign of high intelligence. Samuel Johnson and his biographer, James Boswell, both suffered from the malady. (In his "Life of Johnson," Boswell wrote of his friend, "All his labours, and all his enjoyments, were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence.") Men were thought to be affected by hyp more than women, whose nervous behavior was typically interpreted as hysteria.

It wasn't until the nineteenth century that hypochondria came to be narrowly defined as an excessive fear of illness. Not coincidentally, the disorder flowered at the same time that modern medicine began identifying one rare disease after another. In his novel "In Search of Lost Time," Proust wrote, "For each illness that doctors cure with medicine, they provoke ten in healthy people by inoculating them with the virus that is a thousand times more powerful than any microbe: the idea that one is ill."

Modern psychologists have devoted surprisingly little attention to the disorder. Freud simply asserted that it was the result of libidinal energies being directed at one's own body, and declared that the disorder was not susceptible to "purely psychological inquiry." In later years, psychoanalysts offered a variety of explanations for hypochondria. Some saw the behavior as a general cry for help from the subconscious; others defined it as a targeted, if covert, expression of anger toward physicians.

Hypochondria is so hazily understood that most doctors have no clear idea how to manage patients who suffer from it. The disorder is particularly tricky for the primary-care physician, who often sees patients with nebulous complaints and must judge how deeply to explore these ambiguous symptoms. The doctor knows that a fair number of people in his waiting room each day will prove to have no physical disorder—yet he must remain open to the possibility that each patient might truly be sick. Hypochondriacs, in effect, risk deafening a physician with their relentless background noise.

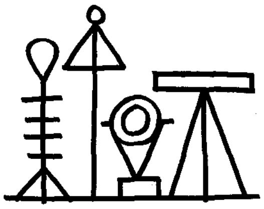
I am a medical specialist who cares for patients with blood diseases, cancer, and AIDS. Several years ago, I was a consulting oncologist for a woman who had developed breast cancer. The tumor had been found early and was removed by surgery. I saw her only once or twice a year, but her internist had told me that she was a severe hypochondriac. At each visit, she unloaded a series of complaints, but almost always mentioned having a queasy feeling in her stomach. Her husband sometimes accompanied her to my office; once, when I asked her how long she had suffered from the stomach symptom, he interrupted and said, "Since I married her." The couple had been together for thirty years. I looked at him from the corner of my eye and we exchanged a dismissive look. Some weeks later, I was called by the patient's primary-care doctor, who told me that she had almost died from sepsis owing to an infected gallbladder. I was distraught that I had treated her complaints with such a cavalier attitude. Sometimes, even a hypochondriac's complaints are valid.

Another reason that doctors are uncomfortable with hypochondriacs is that physicians routinely become afflicted with the disorder themselves. After all, doctors are trained to be exquisite observers of subtle symptoms. As one colleague put it, "When we learned about Hodgkin's disease in medical school, everyone was feeling his lymph nodes, and for several weeks was terrified that he was on the brink of being diagnosed."

This winter, I injured my right hand, and it was not clear whether one of the small bones in my wrist was fractured. An orthopedic surgeon suggested a bone scan. The night after the scan, he called me at home. "It doesn't look like a fracture," he said. "Before we deal with the wrist, however, we need to evaluate the suspicious areas in your left upper ribs." One radiologist thought that the scan, which had surveyed my entire body, showed changes in the ribs which were consistent with metastatic cancer.

As I hung up the phone, my hand trembling, I noticed that my left upper ribs ached. They hadn't hurt before the call. My wife, who is also a doctor, was out of town. I reached her on the phone, and she tried to reassure me that bone scans are notoriously inaccurate and are often misread. I was unable to sleep that night, and the pain in my left ribs became more intense. At eight o'clock the next morning, I was the first in line at the radiology department to have further X-rays done. My ribs were normal. But the discomfort didn't subside for a week, and it was nearly two weeks before I could fully dismiss the fear that I was going to die from bone cancer.

Tom Delbanco is a professor of medicine at Harvard, and the founder of a primary-care and teaching practice at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, in Boston. This spring, he talked to me about how he handles hypochondria. "The primary-care doctor has to be the principal therapist in these circumstances, and he has to be proactive, not reactive," he said. "We doctors are very bad at explaining most things that bother people. And the worst illness in the world is uncertainty. Medicine is imperfect. Yet hypochondriacs want their doctors to be one hundred per cent certain that nothing is wrong, and, of course, they can't be."



The interaction between the hypochondriac and the physician, Delbanco told me, subverts everything that a doctor is taught about how to communicate with patients. Expressing concern only reinforces the hypochondriac's sense that something is awry. Marshalling the considerable technological resources of modern medicine, by ordering sophisticated blood tests and high-resolution M.R.I. scans, still falls short of providing reassurance.

The physician, therefore, is frequently forced into an uncomfortable corner: he must either continue to send the patient for needless evaluations or refuse the patient's urgent requests for another blood analysis. Too often, a fear of lawsuits encourages the doctor to proceed with unnecessary tests, which can in turn heighten a hypochondriac's anxiety.

Delbanco believes that other recent changes in the doctor-patient relationship have further amplified the problem of hypochondria. Self-help books encourage patients to distrust conventional medicine and to be "in touch" with their bodies—to rely on their feelings as much as on a CAT scan or a blood test. "Patients are supposed to be empowered in today's society, and are entitled to demand answers from their doctors," Delbanco said. Moreover, today's physicians are trained to respect a patient's intuition and become more of a partner with the patient. A doctor's egalitarian posture can inadvertently validate the irrational feelings of a hypochondriac.

Instead of just listening quietly, Delbanco also speaks assertively to his hypochondriac patients, readily invoking his authority as a physician. When I met with Delbanco, he talked about how he had dealt with one challenging patient, an intense, flamboyant Russian musician. The patient was terrified that the sensation of pressure in his chest meant that he could suddenly die of a heart attack. Delbanco dismissed these concerns, saying that the symptoms were caused by a particularly difficult piece by Brahms that the musician was performing. (Delbanco is a gifted violinist.) Moreover, he refused to send the musician for an expensive evaluation, declining requests for X-rays and a referral to a specialist. "You're an artist," he told him. "That is why you are suffering. I know you think you are dying, but you have to trust me that you are not. We're not doing any tests. The sun is out. Now get out! See me in two weeks if you have to."

Delbanco almost never accommodates hypochondriacal patients between scheduled visits. "They can send me an e-mail if their fears are boiling over," he said. "But I establish with each patient how many visits he is allowed to my practice." Delbanco and the clinic's other doctors work alongside nurse practitioners and psychiatric social workers. "The most hypochondriacal patients are shared among us, so no single health-care provider has to shoulder the burden all the time," he said. Regular communication within the team prevents these patients from pitting one member against another, or evading one doctor's limits on additional testing.

I asked Delbanco how his patients fared in this constraining structure. "Most adjust to it," he said. "And the hypochondriacal behavior often improves, but rarely disappears." Some patients, of course, find his strictures intolerable. "A young man whose sister had died of cancer initially insisted on seeing me every two weeks," he said. "He was filled with fears that he had a malignancy. I cared for him on and off over some five years, and refused to do repeated tests for his symptoms. Recently, he left in disgust for another doctor."

Delbanco said that he didn't necessarily regard losing a patient as a defeat. "In any illness where you're really tough with patients, some will leave you," he said. "When you tell an alcoholic, 'You're drinking too much and you've got to cut it out,' there's a good chance that he'll get another doctor. But he'll never be the same again. He'll wake up the next morning and say, 'Maybe I drank too much.' The alcoholism field knows that. It's the same with the hypochondriac."

Most of Delbanco's cases end without rancor. He told me of a middle-aged woman who began visiting him ten years ago. The patient was the wife of a busy entrepreneur; she stayed at home, and seemed frustrated and bored. She had fleeting pains in her joints and deep muscle aches in her back, arms, and legs, and was seen by a rheumatologist, who ordered numerous blood tests but did not arrive at a diagnosis. In addition to the joint and muscle pains, the patient felt a tightness across her chest. She had undergone pulmonary-function tests, multiple X-rays, ventilation-perfusion scans, and, ultimately, a lung biopsy, all of which failed to explain her symptoms. She came to Delbanco, certain that she was deathly ill. At first, Delbanco explored a variety of arcane diagnoses, but when all the tests came back negative he grew convinced that the woman was healthy. The patient was so zealous in her desire for treatment, however, that Delbanco became concerned that she would end up undergoing unnecessary exploratory surgery on her chest and abdomen. "I told her we had to stop," he recalled. "I said I had no clue what was wrong, but it was my job to keep her away from harm." Surprisingly, the patient accepted Delbanco's forceful advice, and her symptoms have largely subsided; now she visits him only once or twice a year.

Brian Fallon, a neuropsychiatrist at Columbia University's Department of Psychiatry and at the New York State Psychiatric Institute, has devoted considerable time to the study of hypochondria. He became interested in the subject about fifteen years ago, when he was a resident-in-training and treated a fifty-year-old stockbroker who was convinced that he had a brain tumor. He had seen ten doctors and undergone four brain scans. Even after receiving four negative test results, the broker spent much of his day consumed with thoughts about the subtle ways that a brain tumor can signal its presence through a headache.

Fallon thought that the patient's symptoms might be rooted in an obsessional problem, and prescribed Prozac, at twenty milligrams a day. But then, as is common for residents-in-training, Fallon was assigned to other duties. Months later, he had a chance encounter with the stockbroker. "It was a eureka experience," he said. The stockbroker told him that the Prozac had not had any impact until the initial dose of twenty milligrams was tripled, to sixty milligrams a

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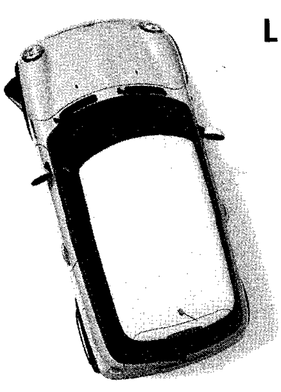

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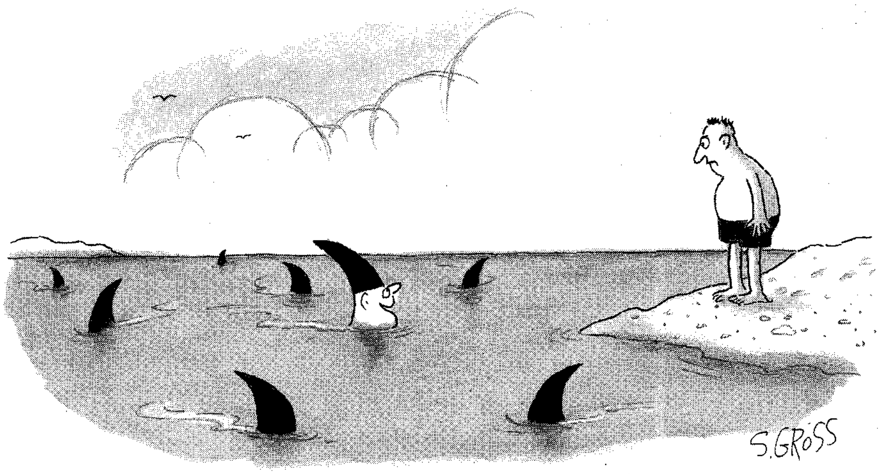


"Come on in. The water's fine."

• •

day—and then his constant worrying about headaches disappeared.

"I was a young university-based psychiatrist looking to begin an academic career," Fallon said. One way to do that was to lay claim to an effective therapy for a difficult disorder. Fallon postulated that hypochondria was a form of obsessive-compulsive disorder. He speculated that the same neural pathways involved in O.C.D. were connected to hypochondria; high doses of serotonin-absorption inhibitors like Prozac had been reported to alleviate some types of O.C.D.

In 1993, Fallon sent more than five hundred letters to physicians affiliated with Columbia, asking them to refer patients who might be hypochondriacs to his clinic. "I got a single referral. Just one," Fallon told me. Hypochondria was apparently such an embarrassing diagnosis that no physician would dare suggest to a patient that he suffered from it. Undeterred, Fallon took out advertisements in the *Daily News* and the *Post*. Instead of using the loaded word "hypochondria" in his ad, Fallon said that he was seeking people with "heightened illness concerns" to participate in a clinical trial. He was deluged with responses.

Fallon's study, which enrolled subjects for nine months, showed a statistically significant difference in the amelioration of hypochondriacal symptoms between a group taking Prozac and one taking a placebo. Fallon remains cautious about his findings—only fifty-seven patients were involved in the study—but he does think that the anti-obsessional agent holds promise for many sufferers. The study also yielded many ancillary insights. For example, several participants experienced what doctors call the "nocebo effect": even though these patients were in the group randomly assigned to take a chemically inert placebo, they reported suffering from side effects associated with taking Prozac, like insomnia and indigestion. These hypochondriacs had likely read their informed-consent forms, which detailed all the possible symptoms that could arise from taking the anti-obsessional drug, a bit too carefully.

One patient who fell prey to the nocebo effect had become aware of the symptoms that can arise when a person stops taking Prozac. "She came to me with all these troubling withdrawal symptoms," Fallon said, including profound nausea, recurrent nightmares, profuse sweating, and pounding in her chest. The patient feared that she had been taken off the drug midway through the trial. In fact, she was still taking Prozac, but her suspicion that she had been switched triggered a florid reaction. "Because of her negative assumptions, she was convinced that she would be unlucky," Fallon said.

In another surprising result of Fallon's study, nearly thirty per cent of the patients who took a placebo had some improvement in their hypochondria. This high rate caused him to reëxamine his initial hypothesis, that hypochondria was exclusively a form of obsessive-compulsive disorder, since the latter rarely shows such a high rate of improvement in placebo trials. Fallon has reconceived hypochondria as a heterogeneous disorder: some sufferers are indeed obsessive-compulsives, whereas others are experiencing a prolonged reaction to a traumatic event, like the death of a loved one. He also believes that people who are labelled hypochondriacs can behave in diametrically opposite ways in terms of seeking medical care. For some, the fear of illness is so great that they avoid all doctors. These patients indulge in the fantasy that if a doctor doesn't examine them, then the illness won't appear. Another group needs to see doctors constantly, even when these visits cause more anxiety or humiliation.

One of Fallon's patients is Amanda. At the bookstore where she once worked, the manager gave her a copy of "Phantom Illness," by Carla Cantor. It had a preface by Fallon, which describes his work with drug-therapy treatments. "It was a revelation," Amanda told me. "After all those years, I finally knew what I had." Amanda entered into another pilot study that Fallon was conducting. The trial was centered on Luvox, a drug related to Prozac but considered to be more beneficial for O.C.D. Luvox muted some of Amanda's most extreme anxieties about illness, but it did not erase them. "I still have anxiety and am too scared to check my breasts regularly," Amanda said, although she has been on the Luvox treatment for three years. "Certain things still set me off. I read 'Fast Food Nation' and learned about mad-cow disease. I didn't eat beef for a long time." But Amanda believes that she has developed some perspective and can better cope with medical problems, particularly if she knows they are not life-threatening. "I had kidney stones three times, and they are really painful, but I said that it's O.K., because you don't die from them."

Arthur Barsky, a psychiatrist at Brigham and Women's Hospital, in Boston, is another of the country's few hypochondria researchers. He takes a highly pragmatic approach to the problem. He doesn't think that it really matters whether hypochondria is a product of nature or nurture; what's important, he believes, is doing something to get rid of a patient's distorted perceptions. Though he acknowledges that a person's brain chemistry may contribute to hypochondria, he generally avoids drug treatment for the disorder. Instead, Barsky focusses on changing destructive behavior through rigorous, sustained therapy—a structured regime that is more refined than, but similar in spirit to, Delbanco's improvised approach.

Recently, Barsky conducted the most ambitious to-date controlled study of cognitive-behavioral therapy for hypochondria. "We teach patients to argue against themselves," Barsky said. That is, the therapist consistently reminds the patient that it is possible for a healthy person to have symptoms but no actual disease: a headache is almost always a headache, not a sign of a brain tumor. The therapist also tries to reduce the amount of attention that the hypochondriac pays to bodily sensations. (Hypochondriacs are unusually attuned to physical sensations; studies have found that they are better than other patients at measuring their heart rates, and can more accurately distinguish between two flashes of light delivered in rapid succession.) Research has shown that focussing on some minor physical symptom amplifies the sensation. For example, if a person holds a sheet of paper between his thumb and forefinger, he will notice a tiny, natural tremor in his hand. A person who stares at the tremor will start to shake more, whereas a person who is diverted by conversation or watching a video will tremble less. "I also tell people to pay attention to their throat," Barsky said. "If you do it long enough, you'll probably start thinking, well, it feels a little dry. Then it starts to feel a bit scratchy and itchy, and you may even cough. The more attention you pay to your body, the more uncomfortable your symptoms will become."

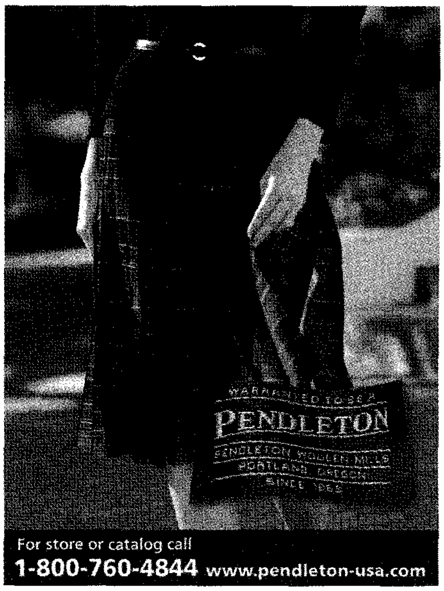
These scientific insights are shared with the patient, who participates in such simple experiments. Barsky works to reform specific behaviors. If the patient rushes home to turn on the six-o'clock news to hear the latest reports on SARS, Barsky instructs him to stop watching television. If he begins his day by reading the obituaries, then he must skip that section of the newspaper.

After an initial medical and psychiatric evaluation, a hundred and eighty-seven hypochondriacs entered Barsky's study, which ran for a year. A hundred and two were assigned to the program of cognitive-behavioral therapy; the eighty-five others served as controls. Those who completed the program improved significantly, experiencing far less frequent bouts of hypochondria.

Barsky is the first to point out problems in his study. The data on the benefits of cognitive-behavioral treatment were drawn from questionnaires filled out by the patients, and these self-assessments were not corroborated by an objective observer, such as a spouse. There was also significant improvement over time in the control group. Barsky says that this effect is common in clinical trials: sometimes the mere act of participating in a clinical trial—that is, receiving a diagnosis from an authoritative figure and being assessed by trained professionals—can have a positive effect on a patient's disorder.

Barsky is hoping to hone a treatment regime that can become the standard therapeutic approach for hypochondria. Linda, a sixty-nine-year-old retired businesswoman, is one of Barsky's patients. (Linda is not her real name.) She is slim and notably fit for her age; she makes a point of exercising, and loves playing golf. When she was in her thirties, she lost both her parents within a matter of months, her mother dying of stomach cancer and her father of a heart attack. Soon after their deaths, she began having indigestion, and worried that it was the first manifestation of the malignancy that had killed her mother. Similarly, while driving in heavy traffic or conducting a business meeting, Linda felt fleeting chest pains and was certain that she was having a fatal myocardial infarction, like her father. Following each episode, she would visit her doctor, who would perform a few basic tests and then send her home.

Finally, Linda's doctor ordered a chest X-ray. At the end of her appointment, the doctor showed the film to Linda; although he said the image was normal, he mentioned in passing that he had noticed a faint shadow, which he thought was of no significance. "I crashed leaving his office," she said. She couldn't shake the notion that the shadow signified cancer. After her primary-care physician retired, Linda found a new internist, who spent more time with her, addressing her fears in long, specific discussions. But his solicitous manner seemed only to magnify her concerns. This past winter, for example, she noticed a small, firm lump on her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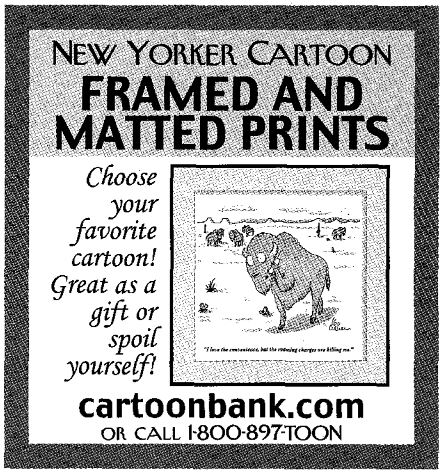
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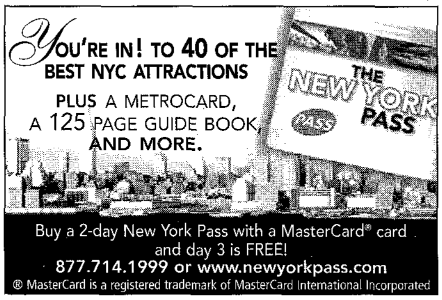
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foot. Her new doctor told her that it appeared to be a benign ganglion cyst, and tried at length to calm her. But, when pressed, the internist refused to say that such a lump could never turn out to be cancerous. He treated Linda with a variety of psychiatric medications, but none had much effect. This spring, she learned of Barsky's study and sought him out.

I spoke with Linda this June. She was fashionably dressed in a black pants suit and a coral sweater set. She was seeing Barsky as an individual patient, not as part of a clinical trial, and it was early in her therapy. He was still gathering information about Linda's beliefs, and how she tried to cope with her fears.

Barsky asked her to report on how she had been feeling since they last spoke, some weeks earlier.

"I wish better," she said. "Something triggers me and then it consumes me." Linda explained that, like many postmenopausal women, she had taken hormone-replacement therapy to prevent heart disease and to preserve her bones. The therapy had been discontinued last year, after the results of the Women's Health Initiative trial were released, indicating that the treatment did not prevent cardiovascular disease and appeared to increase the risk for heart disease, stroke, and breast cancer. Just before Memorial Day weekend, Linda had read in the newspaper, and seen in reports on television, that new data from the W.H.I. study showed that the hormones also failed to prevent dementia.

The news riveted Linda, and not long afterward she felt tenderness in her breast. "I started checking myself, in the shower in the morning, and my breast was painful," she said. As she spoke, her quivering hand moved to the left side of her chest.

Barsky asked if she felt any lumps.

She said that she didn't, but that she couldn't get her mind off the discomfort in her breast. She had taken the hormones for nineteen years, in the hope that they would prevent sickness; now she was convinced that the result of her efforts would be cancer. She called a neighbor who had had breast cancer, and asked her whether breast tenderness might be a symptom of malignancy. The neighbor thought it could be.

"That sent me into a tailspin," Linda said. She began to cry. Barsky handed her a box of tissues, and gave her a few minutes to compose herself. He then asked what she did over the long weekend to deal with her anxiety.

"I took a Xanax, and it helped a little," Linda said. "I didn't talk to my husband about it."

"Good," Barsky said.

"And I cleaned the house like a maniac."

"Good, that's fine." Barsky had recently introduced to Linda the idea that specific activities could divert her attention during a bout of hypochondria.

"But I couldn't get on the golf course," Linda said. She had found that immersing herself in the game was a way to relax. "The weather was awful the whole weekend long."

"And the past experiences, you can't draw on them?" Barsky asked. "They are not reassuring? You could say, 'I've been through this fifty times, and now the odds are that, with the fifty-first time, it also won't be something bad.' "

"I try to think of that," Linda said, "and I thank God every time I get a good report. But I can't stop it. I think, Is this the time I won't be lucky?"

Barsky asked what would be the worst thing about having breast cancer.

"Well, I would die," she said instantly. "You're supposed to get wiser when you get older, but not for me. As I've got older, it's got worse. I'm more afraid of dying. Everything you hear is about cancer or heart disease. My young mother, and my father . . ." Her voice trailed off.

The session was almost over. Barsky said that they would begin working on practical strategies to help divert Linda's attention when she noticed vague bodily symptoms. Her impulse to worry would probably never go away—hypochondriacs almost never lose the impulse to worry about their health. Barsky's studies, however, had shown that a patient's anxiety could often be controlled.

Linda thanked Barsky for his help. "Hypochondria is not at all funny, like people think," she said. "It's not a 'Seinfeld' episode. It's a horrible, horrible way to live." ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

A NATURALIST'S NOTES

BY DAVID OWEN

People are surprised when I tell them that I, by temperament and by avocation, am a naturalist. I don't look like a naturalist. No pair of field glasses dangles from my sunburned neck (which isn't sunburned), and I don't wear hiking boots or an old bandanna, and my arms are not laden with specimen bags and notebooks and tweezers—the tools of the naturalist's trade, you are thinking, but not of mine. I don't live in a tent, not even for part of the year. I don't own a canoe or a kayak or any kind of net. The shelves in my study? I can tell you truthfully that they are not lined with large jars containing the well-preserved bodies of dead squirrels and such, or with old birds' nests, or with a dozen or so different types of ferns that are indistinguishable to you but not to me. No.

And yet a naturalist I definitely am—though of a particular type. Let me begin my explanation with a metaphor: There is a universe in a drop of water. And within that universe? Much more water, also in drop form. And within every one of those (other) drops? Yet another water-filled universe—and so on and so on, down to about a billionth of a billionth of an inch, I'd guess, at which point everything probably looks pretty much the same.

In other words, the answer to my riddle (about how I can be a naturalist without a bandanna or a kayak) is that I am a naturalist within my own home, which, for various reasons, I seldom leave. The natural world under my roof is as varied and as worthy of scientific investigation as any rain forest, or any other type of forest. Indeed, I have spent the past decade within these walls closely observing, and forming hypotheses concerning, a single domestically indigenous mammal species: *Dachshundus miniaturus*. I own two of these fascinating creatures—one "black and tan," the other brown, both "smooth"—or perhaps I should say they own me. At any rate, it is miniature dachshunds that are the objects of my naturalistic study.

GAHAN WILSON

For quite a few years now, my special interest has been their means of communication. Yes, my friend, you are not dreaming: miniature dachshunds—indeed, all dogs; nay, all animals—are able to communicate. They can't read aloud from even a babyish book, but they can convey complex meanings to one another and, not infrequently, to members of unrelated species, such as ours. Over the years, the patient observation of my dogs' "canine culture" has made me conversant with what I now think of as "dog language." It is almost as though an electronic apparatus of mine had suddenly detected some astonishing new radio frequency, whose existence had never before been suspected (for example, because I was listening to a different station). Allow me to share what I have learned.

My dogs—like their close genetic relatives, wolves—sleep much of the day. They do so primarily on the living-room couch, which, by now, smells strongly of them even when they are sleeping elsewhere. Hour after hour, the dogs contentedly loll near my legs or on top of my stomach, their slumber undefiled—until their exquisitely sensitive ears perceive, through the shroud of sleep, the low rumble of the battered panel truck belonging to the mailman. As the truck draws near, the dogs' ears twitch. The short hairs along their spines rise, and their tails bristle—a defensive reflex. A deep growl begins to build at the back of their throats, like an engine commencing to idle, or even to rev. As soon as the mail truck reaches the bottom of my driveway, both dogs leap across my chest and up onto the back of the couch, from which they can see (through a window) the front yard. They begin to bark furiously. Then they jump back onto my chest and down to the floor, run the length of the hallway, and hurl themselves against the front door while continuing, somehow, to bark.

To you, my dogs' fierce snarls would seem like nothing but a violent, meaningless cacophony. To me, though, this "cacophony" (as you call it) is rich with meaning, which I, after years of uncomplaining effort and reflection, am at last able to decode. Following is my translation of a recent such outburst of theirs. Using a complete dog-language lexicon of my own devising, I have rendered it into English:

"*God damn it! God damn it! God damn you!!! God damn you!!! God damn! God damn it! Shit!! Shit!! Shit!!! God-God-God damn it! Crap!!! Damn!!! Damn!!! God damn! God damn!!! Fuck you! Go to Hell!!!! Hell!! Go to Hell!! Son of a bitch!! Damn it! Go to Hell!!! Go to Hell!!! God damn it! Damn! God damn it to Hell!!!!*" (And so on, until five or ten minutes after the mailman, himself cursing, though in his own language—as usual—had driven away, and my dogs, reluctantly, it seemed, returned to the living room and, with a couple of backward glances toward the hallway, rejoined me on the couch.) ♦

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE CAR OF TOMORROW

Why hydrogen-powered vehicles are attracting some unlikely supporters.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

Capitol Hill is a lousy place to sell a car but a good place to sell the idea of one, which is why on a muggy afternoon not long ago Rick Wagoner, the chairman and C.E.O. of General Motors, was standing on First Street next to a hydrogen-powered minivan. Every few minutes, a new senator would show up, trailing a cloud of aides, and Wagoner, smiling fixedly, would pop open the hood or offer to take him for a ride. His solicitude was in most cases unnecessary. "I believe that my kids and for sure my grandchildren will be driving these," Senator George Voinovich, of Ohio, announced to no one in particular before climbing into the driver's seat. Senator Byron Dorgan, of North Dakota, arrived at the event with a pro-hydrogen—and pro-Dorgan—news release already in hand. The Senator's plan to "help free Americans from the grip of foreign oil by developing hydrogen fuel-cell technologies to power much of the nation's automobile fleet" was "gaining ground and picking up steam in Congress."

Outside of science fiction, the hydrogen car is probably the most radical reinvention of the automobile that has ever been imagined. It runs cool and basically silent—the G.M. minivan makes a faint whirring sound—off an inexhaustible fuel supply, though even referring to hydrogen as a fuel betrays the limits of the old terminology. It produces no emissions except water, which, upon emerging from the tailpipe, is, in principle at least, clean enough to drink. It does not need to be plugged in. It can even serve as a source of electricity: at night, a hydrogen-car owner can use his vehicle to light his home, or connect it to the grid and sell power to his neighbors. Sometime in the past year or so, the hydrogen car moved out of the laboratory and, if not quite onto the road, into the bright showroom of public relations.

In his State of the Union address, in January, President Bush praised the hydrogen car as a means of making the country "much less dependent on foreign sources of energy" and called for a $1.2-billion research effort, "so that America can lead the world in developing clean, hydrogen-powered automobiles." (The Administration has dubbed the hydrogen-car initiative "FreedomCAR," and was planning to call the hydrogen-fuel program "FreedomFUEL" until it was informed that this name was already being used by, among others, Amway, a big Republican donor.) Environmentalists, who have long been pressing automakers to produce zero-emission vehicles, have endorsed the hydrogen car, and so have the automakers, who have long been trying to fend off environmental regulation. Such is the level of interest in hydrogen technology these days that the opening of a hydrogen filling station on the outskirts of Reykjavík, in April, was treated as an event of international significance. For the occasion, Shell Hydrogen, a division of Royal Dutch/Shell, which operates the station, handed out bottles of water with labels that read "The Ultimate Fuel."

General Motors has taken up the cause with much well-publicized zeal. The congressional "ride and drive" coincided with the opening of a new G.M. office in Washington devoted entirely to promoting fuel-cell technology. The company claims to have already spent more than a billion dollars on research and development, and says that it wants to be selling hydrogen cars at the rate of a million a year by the middle of the next decade. In D.C., I met several of the corporation's top executives, all of whom told me—often in exactly the same words—that the internal-combustion engine's time had passed. "You've got to get yourself to an endgame that removes the automobile from the environmental debate," Larry Burns, G.M.'s vice-president for research and development, and planning, said. So much enthusiasm from the world's largest and, by many accounts, most recalcitrant car manufacturer for such a revolutionary technology is unprecedented. But whether it means that G.M.—or, for that matter, Shell or George Bush—truly believes in the promise of hydrogen or just the opposite is difficult to say.

A car that runs on hydrogen does not, or at least need not, look in any way out of the ordinary. For instance, on the outside the HydroGen 3 minivan that G.M. brought to Capitol Hill is indistinguishable from an Opel Zafira, a vehicle popular in Europe, and, from the driver's perspective, operates in much the same fashion. But where a normal Zafira would have a gasoline tank the HydroGen 3 is equipped with a vacuum-insulated stainless-steel cannister built to keep liquid hydrogen supercooled at -253°C. And where a normal Zafira would have an engine a HydroGen 3 has a fuel cell, or really an assembly of fuel cells, called a stack.

The basic idea behind the fuel cell—that hydrogen can be used to produce electricity—is generally credited to an English polymath named William Grove, a friend of the pioneering physicist Michael Faraday. Grove, by training a barrister—his most famous client was the so-called "Rugeley poisoner," who plied his victims with strychnine—was an enthusiastic experimenter in his own right. Intrigued by studies of electrolysis, Grove reasoned that if it was possible to break water down into its constitutive elements using an electric current, it might also be possible to do the reverse. In 1839, in his London laboratory, he built a device that, by combining hydrogen and oxygen across a pair of platinum electrodes, produced a small current. A few years later, he increased the electrical output by stringing together a series of such devices, but he seems never to have pursued the idea much further. "For my part, I must say that science to me generally ceases to become interesting as it becomes useful," Grove once observed.

Automakers argue that stiffer regulations on emissions aren't needed, because new technology will solve all the problems.

JAVIER MARISCAL

Not much practical use was made of Grove's invention until the nineteen-sixties, when General Electric developed fuel cells to provide electric power for the Gemini space flights. These days, fuel cells can be found on board the space shuttle and also in a variety of more mundane locations, including the basement of 4 Times Square. (The stack at 4 Times Square, where this magazine has its offices, provides fifteen per cent of the building's electricity.) Enthusiasts predict a variety of new applications for the technology in the very near future. Engineers at Intel, Motorola, and 3M, for example, are busy trying to produce a fuel cell small enough to fit inside a video camera or a mobile phone. At a recent trade show, Toshiba demonstrated a cell for laptops which it said could come on the market as early as next year. Assuming that the kinks can be worked out, such miniature fuel cells could last six times longer than conventional batteries.

For a number of reasons—primary among them the inefficiency of the internal-combustion engine—automobiles represent a particularly promising fuel-cell application. Fuel cells produce electrical, rather than mechanical, energy—in this way, fuel-cell cars are similar to battery-powered vehicles—and, using the same amount of energy, a fuel cell can propel a car nearly three times as far as an ordinary combustion engine. At the same time, cars represent a peculiar challenge: they require a great deal of power, are expected to travel long distances between refuellings, and are called on to last for ten years or more. Among the many obstacles to commercial production are cost (most fuel cells today are made with platinum), durability (fuel cells tend to degrade after a relatively short time), and fuel storage (hydrogen is so light that it is generally kept under extremely high pressure or at a very low temperature). There are also concerns about safety, although fuel-cell advocates maintain that, owing to misunderstandings about the Hindenburg, the dangers of hydrogen have been greatly exaggerated. (In a recent paper titled "Twenty Myths About Hydrogen," the physicist Amory Lovins argues that hydrogen is "at least as safe as natural gas or LPG"—liquefied petroleum gas—"and arguably is inherently safer than gasoline.")

Finally, there is the problem of obtaining hydrogen in the first place. Although it is the most plentiful element in the universe, hydrogen on earth exists almost exclusively in combination with other substances. As a result, it must be extracted, a process that can itself require a considerable amount of energy. (In the case of hydrogen obtained from water, the energy consumed by electrolysis is actually greater than the energy produced by a fuel cell.) For this reason, hydrogen is considered not an energy source but an energy carrier, which helps explain why so many people with so many conflicting agendas find it attractive. Hydrogen can be produced using renewable energy sources, like wind, but it can just as easily—in fact, perhaps more easily—be extracted by less environmentally benign means. G.M., for instance, created a prototype for a fuel-cell truck, since abandoned, that extracted hydrogen from gasoline through a process known as "reforming." This approach obviates the need for a whole new hydrogen-delivery infrastructure, but since it produces substantial amounts of carbon dioxide, it also obviates much of the reason for switching to fuel cells. Similarly, hydrogen can be produced from coal; once all the emissions of that process are taken into account, it's debatable whether fuel-cell cars yield any environmental benefit at all. In the budget that President Bush presented in February, he proposed that the federal government spend twenty-one million dollars researching hydrogen production using coal, natural gas, and nuclear energy.

The day after the congressional ride-and-drive, I attended a second fuel-cell event, this one staged by G.M. for reporters and officials of agencies like the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The program began in a meeting room at Washington's Union Station, with a presentation by Beth Lowery, the company's vice-president for energy and environment. Stationed between two flat-screen monitors mounted on silver poles, Lowery described G.M.'s goal as "reducing and eventually eliminating" emissions both from its cars and from its factories; as she spoke, the words "Path to Zero" flashed in synchrony across the screens. Lowery acknowledged that it might be "confusing" for some people to hear this, given G.M.'s long-standing opposition to raising federal fuel-economy standards. But, she announced cheerfully, "we don't think it's contradictory at all." After she was done, we all boarded a special, superefficient bus plastered with photographs of snow-covered mountains and fields of wildflowers, and headed out to R.F.K. Stadium.

DORIS

Never went to Birdland, so what, went to the Y
danced all night for a quarter, girls sat down
on bridge chairs, can't remember if they were smoking,
men wore jackets and ties, I know the name of
one, I'll call her Doris—that was her name—
her grandfather was a rabbi from Bialystock
and over ninety, she was twenty. I was
twenty-one, I guess, he had to be born
before the Crimean War and who were the gangs
that built the wide-gauge railroad tracks that reached
the Urals in 1860, he was only
five feet tall, his hands you can't imagine
nor what the sofa was like and what our struggle was.

—*Gerald Stern*

In a parking lot next to the stadium, G.M. had set up two tents where presentations on topics like "Hydrogen Storage" and "Infrastructure and Stationary Applications" could be heard. Ignoring these, everyone crowded around the prototype of a car that G.M. calls the Hy-Wire, which was parked next to a makeshift track fashioned out of traffic cones. Sleek and low, with a sloping windshield and a see-through trunk, the Hy-Wire suggests a vision of the future that is part "Matrix Reloaded," part "Sleeper." (Before test-driving it, I had to sign a waiver stating that I understood that there were "certain risks involved in driving and riding non-production GM vehicles" and that I "knowingly" had decided to assume them.) Although the Hy-Wire is powered by compressed hydrogen, its snazziest features—small video screens, for example, in place of sideview mirrors—have little or nothing to do with fuel-cell technology. When it was my turn to take it around the track, I started out by nearly ramming into a concrete barrier, but by my second lap I started to get the hang of things. The Hy-Wire doesn't have an accelerator or a brake, at least in the familiar sense of these terms; to speed up or slow down, you rotate handles on the steering wheel. And when you sit in it your feet stick out in front of you, go-cart style. Fuel cells have no moving parts, so the Hy-Wire offers an almost uncannily smooth ride, as if the car were floating. When my turn was over, one of the many G.M. public-relations agents hovering around asked me how it had gone. I couldn't help answering exactly as I knew I was expected to: "That was really cool."

The hydrogen car represents what is sometimes called a "leapfrog" technology: it does not merely improve on something that exists but vaults over all possible improvements to achieve something totally new. Given the many risks inherent in such a technological leap, one of the obvious questions about G.M.'s strategy is: Why gamble? A far surer way to reduce emissions—and to set out along the "path to zero"—would be simply to produce smaller cars, or, barring that, to use already proven energy-saving technologies. Toyota and Honda, for example, have begun commercially producing hybrid cars, which are equipped with both an internal-combustion engine and an electric battery that recaptures energy ordinarily lost to friction.

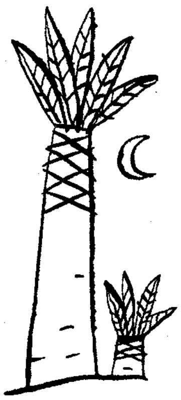
G.M. offers several explanations—some of them contradictory—for its strategy. On the one hand, company executives point to the demands of the marketplace, where fuel efficiency is evidently a low priority. As Beth Lowery put it, the makeup of the American auto fleet reflects "what people buy, and not what we offer." On the other hand, G.M. maintains that the problem with innovations like hybrids is that they are not, by its standards, fuel-efficient enough. To the extent that the company's position has a logic, it might be summed up as: Why settle for half a loaf when one day a whole loaf may be available? (Further complicating G.M.'s position is the fact that even as its executives continue to criticize hybrid technology the company has announced that it will begin offering optional hybrid engines in some of its cars and trucks.)

Chris Sloane is the director of G.M.'s FreedomCAR and Technology Strategy. I met her after my ride in the Hy-Wire in the R.F.K. Stadium parking lot. "If we took the whole transportation sector, and everybody in the whole country went to hybrids and small cars immediately, and say you got your thirty-per-cent gain, which is huge," she told me. "Then you look at what that does to CO_2 in the atmosphere. All you did is move the point where we hit certain levels by twenty, thirty, forty years. That's all you did. So now you've said, 'I like my third-generation grandchild more than my fifth'? Well, do you know those people? I just went through all of this—I feel good about my activity—but I didn't solve anything. What happens if you go to a non-carbon fuel? Now we're talking about a real solution."

For more than thirty years now, Detroit has been trying to grapple with—or, by many accounts, simply evade—the problem of automobile emissions. In the early nineteen-seventies, when Congress began debating the need for stricter clean-air standards, the Big Three organized a massive public-relations campaign. They insisted that the proposed rules were superfluous—one ad declared that General Motors had already made "a public pledge to solve the problem"—and, at the same time, impossibly unrealistic. In a November, 1970, speech, Ed Cole, G.M.'s president, declared that the new standards "simply aren't attainable." No sooner had the standards been passed than automakers launched a second campaign to get them rolled back.

Facing mounting criticism for such tactics, the Big Three a decade or so ago adopted a new approach. Government intervention wasn't needed, they argued, because an imminent breakthrough would render the whole issue moot. Before taking up hydrogen, G.M. made a heavy investment, at least rhetorically, in electric vehicles. The company's showcase car, the EV1, ran off a battery that consumers were supposed to plug in and recharge at night. Speaking at the Greater Los Angeles Auto Show in January, 1996, Jack Smith, G.M.'s chairman, declared, "It's time to get electric vehicles out of the lab, into the showroom, and onto the road." He went on to observe, "When auto historians look back, they will see this car as the first in the new generation of vehicles. And they will note that G.M. made it." The company managed to lease only eight hundred EV1s in California and Arizona before quietly abandoning the project. Also in the mid-nineties, G.M., together with Ford and Chrysler—now DaimlerChrysler—formed a joint venture with the Clinton Administration known as the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles. The goal of this venture, which was popularly referred to as the "super car" program, was to engineer a family-size sedan capable of getting eighty miles to the gallon. All told, the federal government spent some $1.5 billion on the program. By the time the Bush Administration terminated it, last year, it had yielded a grand total of three prototype vehicles.

Meanwhile, as one reinvention effort after another has failed, the cars that Detroit has actually been selling have grown increasingly inefficient. According to a report released recently by the Environmental Protection Agency, passenger vehicles sold in this country last year averaged only 20.4 miles to the gallon, the worst performance in twenty-two years. As the E.P.A. dryly noted, the trend has significant public-policy implications: "Fuel economy is directly related to carbon dioxide emissions, the most prevalent greenhouse gas." G.M. cars and trucks performed particularly poorly, according to the E.P.A.'s data: of the world's seven major automakers, only Ford had a worse over-all fuel-economy record. It is a striking fact that at the same time that G.M. was abandoning the "super car" as too pricey and impractical, it was bringing out the H2, its new version of the Humvee, the military vehicle now marketed to suburban drivers. The H2 costs fifty thousand dollars, weighs more than four tons, and gets just over ten miles to the gallon. It is so heavy that, by the bizarre logic of federal fuel-efficiency standards, the E.P.A. doesn't even count it against G.M.'s required fleet average.



Not long after I took the Hy-Wire for a drive, I went to visit the Natural Resources Defense Council, one of the nation's leading environmental groups. When I arrived at the organization's Washington office, the first thing I noticed was a little basket filled with cardboard cutouts that were supposed to look like burned pieces of toast. "Some mistakes are no big deal," the toast warned. "Global warming isn't one of them." On the back, the toast advised, "Drive smart, drive less."

For the past several years, the N.R.D.C. has been lobbying, unsuccessfully, for an across-the-board increase in the federal fuel-efficiency standards, to forty miles per gallon. I met with Jon Coifman, one of the group's communications directors, and, via speakerphone from San Francisco, Roland Hwang, one of its auto-industry analysts. I asked them about G.M.'s contention that hydrogen cars, as opposed to higher standards, were the answer.

"I'll throw out a very cynical perspective, which happens to match what we have seen from General Motors over the past several years," Hwang said. "They're trying to bedazzle us with very fancy prototypes to get us hooked on the fact that they're working very hard on a technology that we all agree is ultimately the prize—a zero-pollution motor vehicle. At the same time, General Motors is on record saying, 'Please don't make us improve the fuel economy of our current gasoline-vehicle fleet.' They're trying to undermine political momentum to do something that is going to have a real impact over the next decade or two."

In the course of a year, the average car on the road today consumes six hundred gallons of gasoline and produces six tons of carbon dioxide. Coifman noted that between now and 2020, when, according to the most optimistic projections, fuel-cell cars could be expected to become competitive, Americans will buy some three hundred million new vehicles. "Those vehicles are going to be with us ten, twelve, fifteen years each," he said. "They're going to burn a lot of gas, and they're going to be emitting a lot of pollution. And we need to be focussing on those."

He went on, "There's two questions:

Is this a political red herring that the industry and the Administration are throwing out there, and are fuel cells ultimately a real solution? And I think the answer to both questions is yes."

What is being billed as the world's first "commercially integrated" hydrogen station sits on the side of the Vesturlandsvegur highway on the eastern outskirts of Reykjavík, next to a brewery decorated with forty-foot-high plastic beer bottles and a minimart where, in keeping with Icelandic prices, a cup of vending-machine coffee costs more than three dollars. Next month, for the first time, city buses, built by DaimlerChrysler, are supposed to fuel up on hydrogen produced at the station through electrolysis.

Iceland generates virtually all of its electricity from renewable sources—hydropower supplies eighty-four per cent, and the rest is geothermal. In addition, residents of Reykjavík heat their homes using water that emerges from underground springs at 100° C. Still, the country imports some six and a half million barrels of oil annually to power its cars, trucks, and commercial fishing fleet. Ten years ago, Bragi Arnason, a chemistry professor at the University of Iceland, proposed that the country, which has only two hundred and eighty thousand inhabitants, wean itself from imported oil by converting to hydrogen. Arnason kept pushing the idea in academic journals and newspaper articles, in the process earning the nickname Professor Hydrogen. At first, the notion was dismissed as eccentric; then, in 1999, Iceland's government, together with its university and its technological institute, formed a company, Icelandic New Energy, with the stated goal of eventually using hydrogen in place of all fossil fuels. DaimlerChrysler, Shell Hydrogen, and Norsk Hydro, a producer of electrolyzers, bought stakes in the company.

Arnason is a stocky sixty-seven-year-old with snow-white hair and a florid complexion. When I went to see him a few weeks ago in his spartan office in Reykjavík, he told me that he saw Iceland as a "pilot country," where companies will come to test out new technologies before trying to market them elsewhere. "You see, we are a very small society, but we are a real society," he said. "So that if we can develop this technology here in the next twenty or thirty years it can be moved over to larger societies."

Engineers from all over the world have already started showing up in Iceland, and, when they do, often they end up in Arnason's office. "The Japanese are coming here very frequently," he told me, rummaging through a stack of business cards. He said that he expected to see hydrogen cars introduced on the island sometime in the next decade or so, but that he didn't anticipate being around to see them in general use. "From the year I started until we have this transformation completed will be at least fifty years, and that seems to be quite normal," he said. "If you look back in history, it has usually taken half a century to change from one type of energy to another—from wood to coal and coal to oil. My generation will see the first steps."

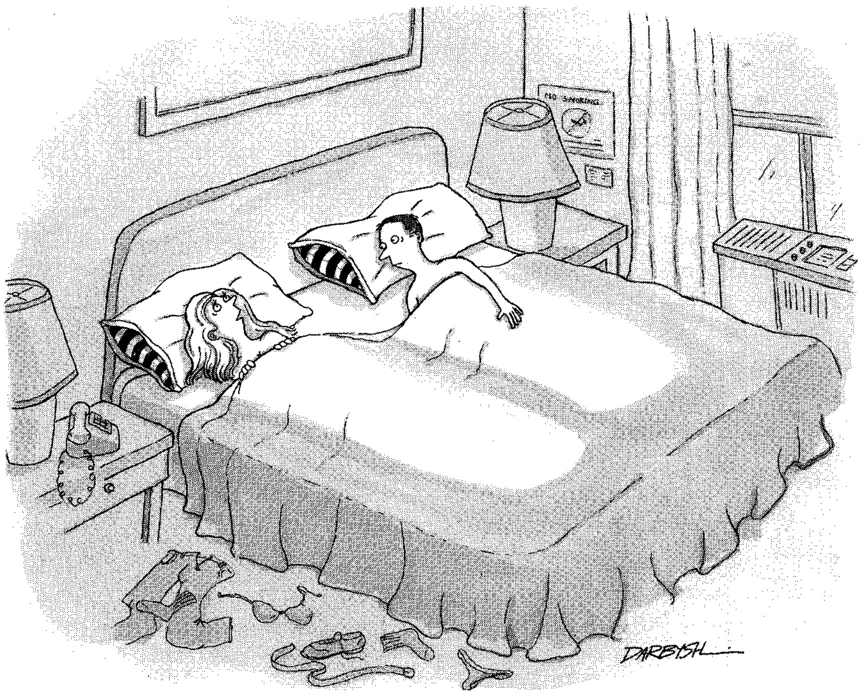
After a while, Arnason took me next door to see his lab. On the counter was a device with a photovoltaic cell on one end and a little fan on the other. In between was a cylinder of water, some clear plastic tubes, and a fuel cell, which looked like two sheets of cellophane stretched over some wire mesh. When Arnason turned on a desk lamp, the photovoltaic cell began to produce electricity, which electrolyzed the water. Hydrogen and oxygen ran through the tubes to the fuel cell, where they recombined to produce more water, in the process turning the fan. It was an impressive display. Arnason told me that the device had been constructed "to show politicians whenever we need money."

The elegance of hydrogen technology is hard to resist: as Arnason points out, you almost have to believe in it. But this is precisely the trouble with hydrogen. It may turn out to be the future, as G.M. insists, or merely a distraction from it.

As it happens, the master of imaginary futures, Jules Verne, already proposed a hydrogen-powered world back in the eighteen-seventies. In his novel "The Mysterious Island," a group of Union officers escape by balloon from a Confederate prison, only to crash-land on a deserted isle in the Pacific Ocean. Before meeting up with Captain Nemo, they while away the hours discussing, among other topics, the Union's dependence on dwindling supplies of coal. One of the officers insists that there is "nothing to fear."

"Yes, my friends, I believe that water will one day be employed as fuel, that hydrogen and oxygen which constitute it, used singly or together, will furnish an inexhaustible source of heat and light," he declares. "I believe then that when the deposits of coal are exhausted, we shall heat and warm ourselves with water. Water will be the coal of the future."

"I should like to see that," one of his companions replies. ♦



"Do you think those less fortunate are at least having better sex?"

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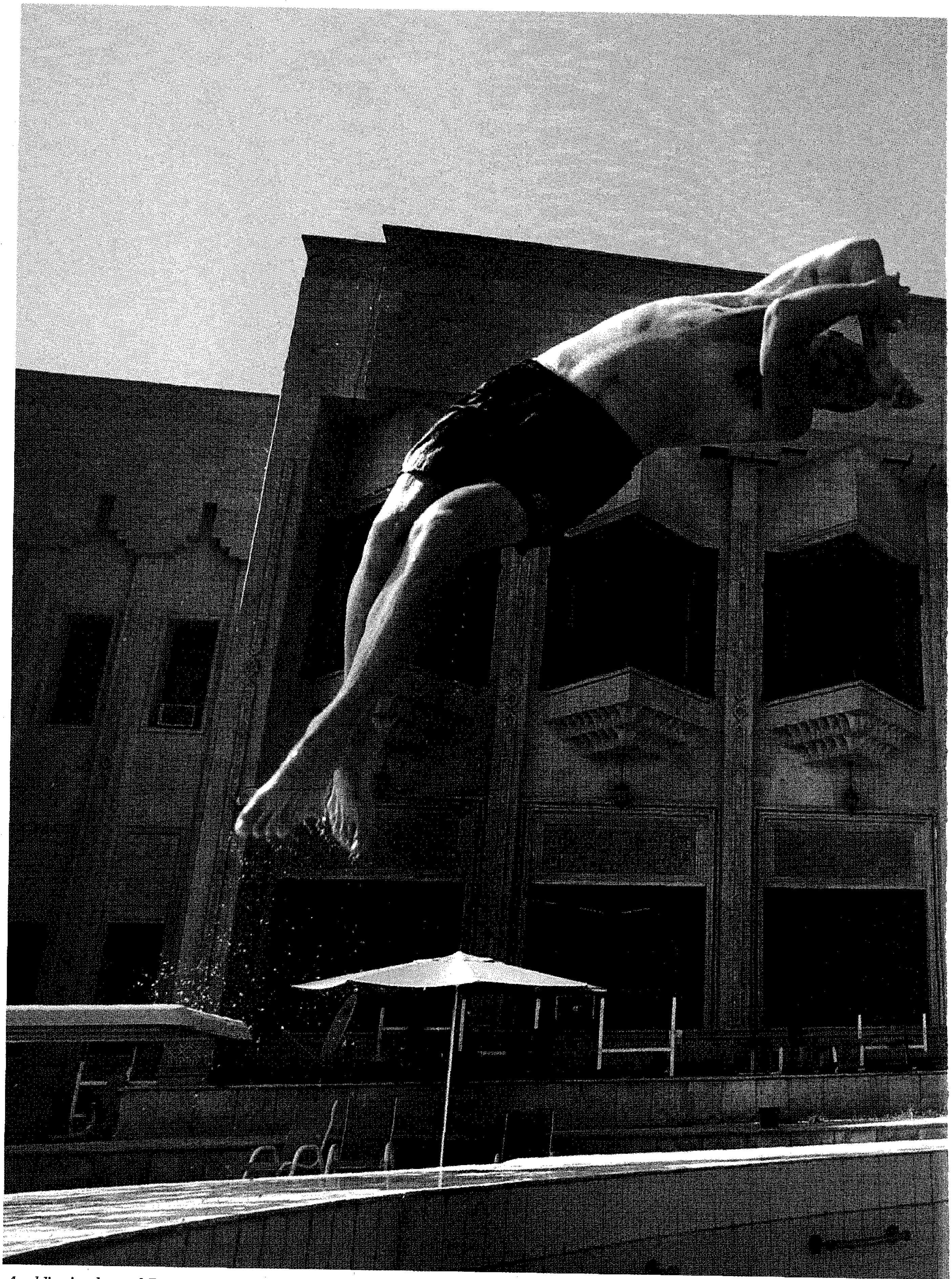


CORBIS

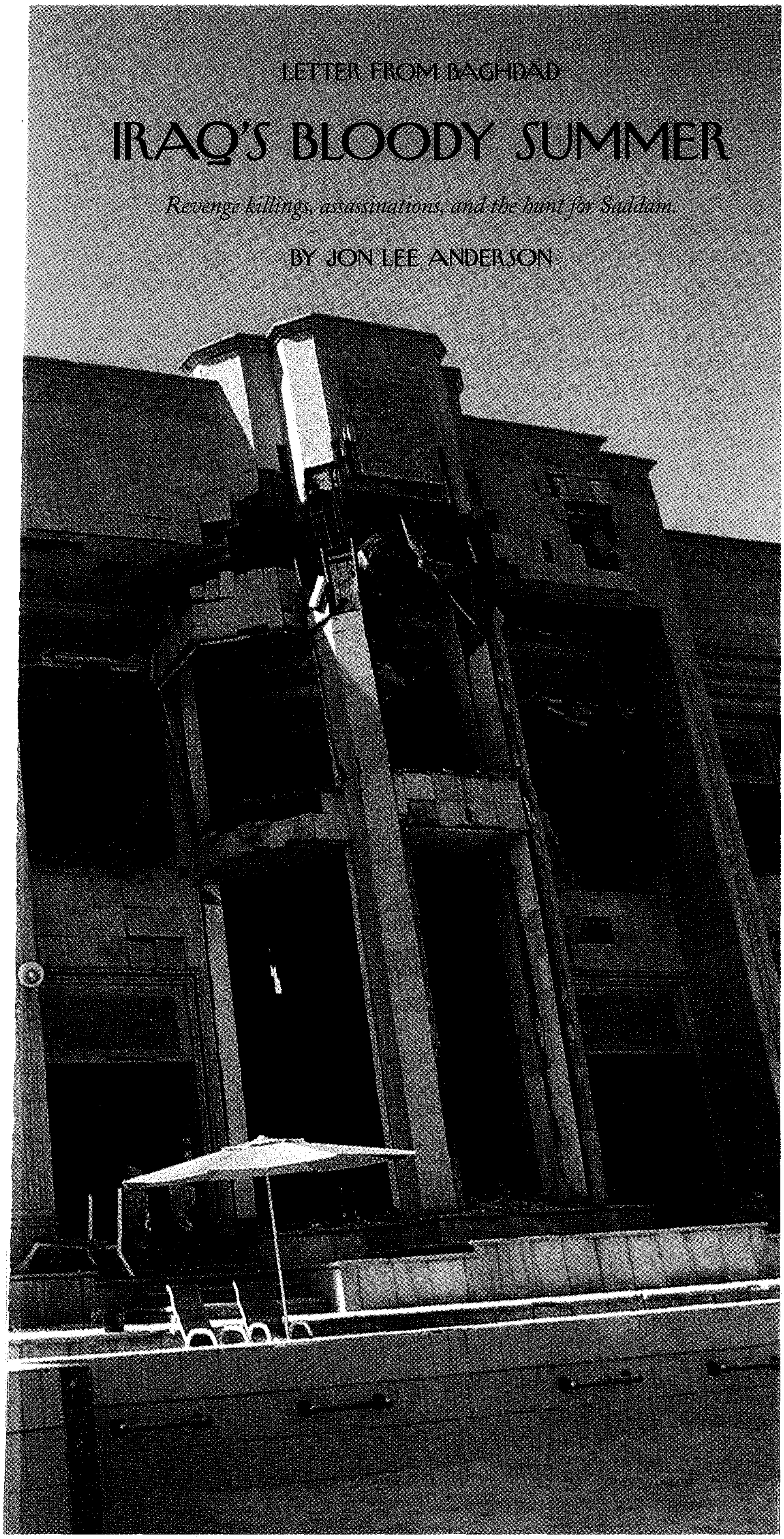
A soldier in the 2nd Battalion of the U.S. Army's 3rd Artillery Regiment dives into the pool at battalion headquarters in Uday Hussein's

LETTER FROM BAGHDAD

IRAQ'S BLOODY SUMMER

Revenge killings, assassinations, and the hunt for Saddam.

BY JON LEE ANDERSON



former palace, which includes his "love shack." Photograph by Benjamin Lowy.

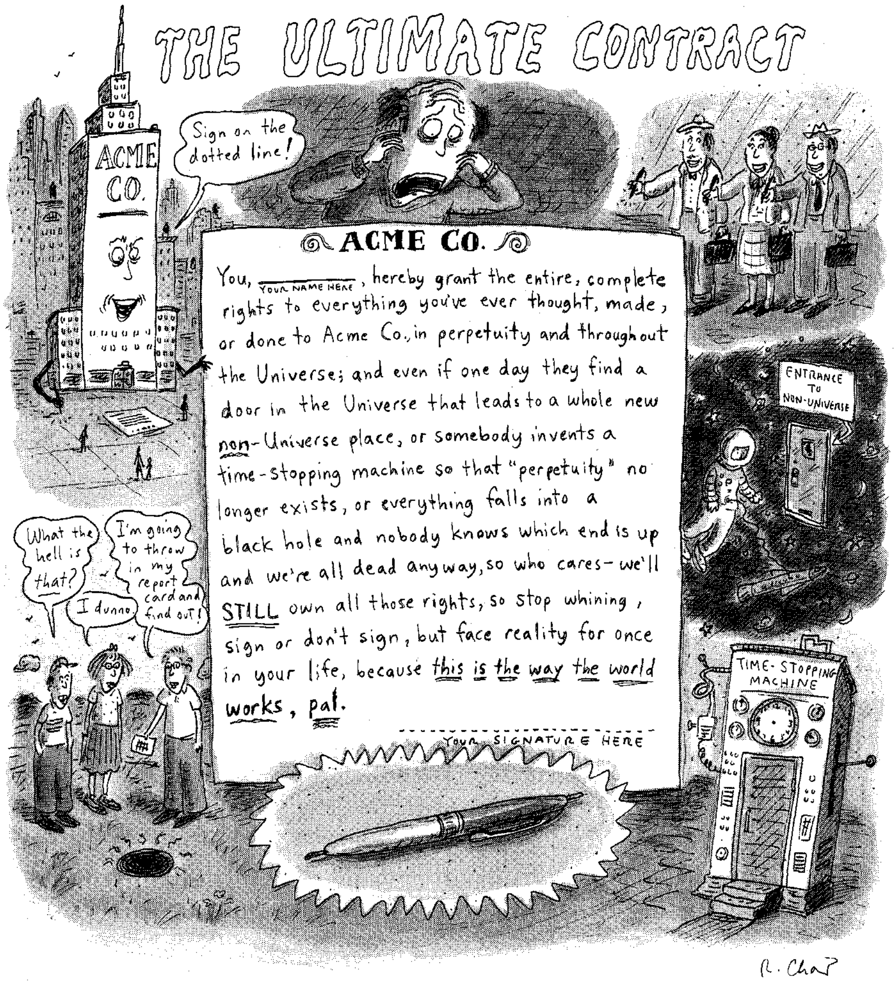
One morning a few days before Qusay and Uday Hussein were killed in Mosul, I had an appointment with the Imam of the Abu Hanifa Mosque in Adhamiya, a traditionally pro-Baathist, predominantly Sunni Muslim neighborhood in the northwestern part of Baghdad. Saddam Hussein made his final public appearance outside the mosque on April 9th, and for several days afterward his fedayeen and Baathist militias fought the Americans in Adhamiya, staging a kind of last stand before melting away. I was travelling with Sabah, my driver, and Salih, a translator. As we began negotiating Adhamiya's narrow streets, I thought I heard a few gunshots, which would have been unusual when Saddam was running the city but was not now. A Humvee was blocking a side road, and an American soldier sat behind some sandbags in front of a building that Salih thought was the Adhamiya police station. A couple of blocks farther on, several more shots rang out, and two men in civilian clothes trotted toward us, firing pistols. At that moment, a blue van pulled in front of our car, and the two men with the guns broke into a run.

I yelled at Sabah to get us out of there, quickly, but we were stuck in traffic, behind the blue van. I looked back and saw that the men with guns were about thirty feet away, standing abreast, with their legs wide apart, arms outstretched and hands pressed together, pointing their weapons in our direction. Salih and I ducked below our seats and I heard the bangs of the pistols, but nothing hit us. Some car horns blared. The blue van sped down a side street and Sabah followed it. The van turned to the right, and Sabah turned right also, and suddenly we were in a dead-end lane. The driver of the van threw open his door, leaped out, and ran off in a crouch. Sabah jerked our car into reverse and pulled back into the street and then put the car into forward and accelerated—a cumbersome process that seemed to take forever. The two men with the guns had reappeared in their shooting stance. This time, with no other vehicles in sight, they were obviously aiming at us. But they paused. They didn't shoot, and in a few seconds we had got out of their line of fire.

Salih tried to calm me as we made our way to the mosque, which was only a few blocks away. There was a gaping hole in the yellow brick minaret at the front, where it had been hit by tank fire on April 10th, after the neighborhood came out to greet Saddam. Salih walked me around a garden at the back of the mosque, past a new martyrs' cemetery for victims of the fighting during the last days of the war. Several dozen gravestones had been placed in a shady area under some date palms. The temperature was approaching a hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit by now, and we went inside, where it was cool, and sat on the floor of the prayer hall, leaning against a pillar. The tomb of Abu Hanifa, one of the Sunnis' most revered holy men, was in the center of the hall, behind glass. A couple of men were sleeping nearby, and others were stretched out, reading. It was exam week in Iraq, and many students go to mosques to study. A boy came over with a pitcher and poured glasses of cold water for us.

We were escorted to the Imam's reception room in a pleasantly air-conditioned side building. Velour-covered chairs and little coffee tables were arranged around the sides of the room, as in a diwan, the traditional Arab meeting place. A young boy came in and sat quietly beside me. Salih said he was the Imam's son. His father, a beefy man wearing glasses and a white robe and a skullcap, entered a few minutes later, mopping the sweat from his brow. He introduced himself and sat next to the boy. Two men in street clothes sat at the other end of the room.

The Imam, Mouyad Al-Aadhami, is from one of Adhamiya's oldest families. He had been appointed Imam of the mosque after the previous Imam, a notorious supporter of Saddam, was ousted. I asked him about Adhamiya's reputation as a pro-Saddam neighborhood. "This is false," he said. Saddam's final appearance there was "one of the tricks he used to make the Americans believe the people of Adhamiya like him. In fact, they don't like him." The people of Adhamiya, like people in Iraq everywhere, had been victims of Saddam's brutality: "He hanged people here, and people were watched and followed."


THE ULTIMATE CONTRACT
ACME CO.
Sign on the dotted line!
ACME CO.
You, ______ YOUR NAME HERE, hereby grant the entire, complete rights to everything you've ever thought, made, or done to Acme Co., in perpetuity and throughout the Universe; and even if one day they find a door in the Universe that leads to a whole new non-Universe place, or somebody invents a time-stopping machine so that "perpetuity" no longer exists, or everything falls into a black hole and nobody knows which end is up and we're all dead anyway, so who cares—we'll STILL own all those rights, so stop whining, sign or don't sign, but face reality for once in your life, because this is the way the world works, pal.
YOUR SIGNATURE HERE
ENTRANCE TO NON-UNIVERSE
TIME-STOPPING MACHINE
What the hell is that?
I dunno.
I'm going to throw in my report card and find out!
R. Chast

Nonetheless, I said, several American military officers had told me that Adhamiya was a center of guerrilla resistance against their forces. "I don't agree," he said, curtly. "The area is tribal and religious, and the people here reject occupation. The Sunni people are not the only ones who oppose the occupiers. Our brothers, the Shia, began the resistance first. The southern tribes rose up and sacrificed themselves and their sons for the defense of their country."

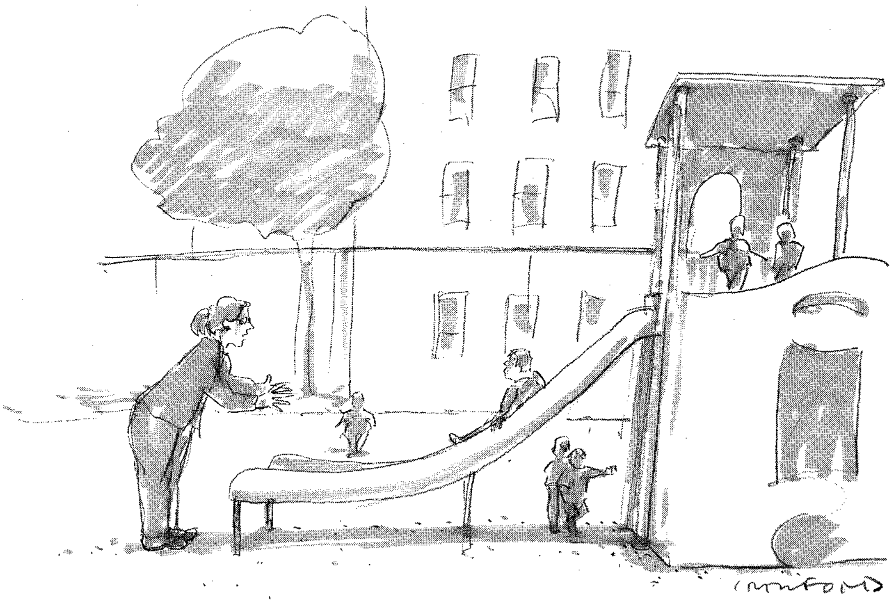
I asked him what southern resistance he was referring to, exactly. Southern Iraq was largely peaceful. Most of the attacks against Americans were taking place in the so-called Sunni triangle, the base of which is between Fallujah and Baghdad, and the apex at Tikrit, Saddam's home town, ninety miles north. The Imam explained that he meant the resistance offered to American marines during the invasion. He said that there had been many more acts of resistance since then. When I said that I had not heard of many, he said, conspiratorially, that "they are kept away from the media."

"So, what do you think of this kind of action?" I said. "Do you approve of it?"

"These are the feelings of the people," the Imam replied.

We spoke for a while longer about the killing of American soldiers in Iraq, which was occurring at the rate of about one a day then, although the Imam disputed that. He brought up the issue of the absence of weapons of mass destruction and mentioned that many Iraqi homes had been destroyed, while the Americans were living in Saddam's palaces. It was a discussion that wasn't going anywhere. I asked him what he thought should happen. "The Americans should get out of the country before there is more bloodshed," he said. "After that, some kind of coöperation between the two countries can be reached, according to their bilateral interests." Then he excused himself. He had to deliver the noon prayers. One of the men in street clothes, who spoke English, walked me out. He shook my hand and smiled. "You are welcome here as a journalist," he said, "and now we are friends. I think you know what would happen if you were a soldier." I nodded. We understood each other perfectly, I said. He invited me to stay for lunch, but I begged off, politely.

Sabah was waiting for me in the shade under the eaves of a building near the parking area. Word had gone around about the shooting incident, he said. Apparently, a gang of criminals was to appear for trial that morning at a courthouse next to the police station that we had passed as we entered Adhamiya. Accomplices of the accused had tried to break them out of custody, and the police had opened fire. We had been caught behind one of the gang's escape cars—the blue van. The men on foot with guns were policemen. It seemed a plausible enough story, but later, when I asked some people in Adhamiya about it, no one seemed to have heard a thing. On the other hand, it seemed like a reasonable story to them, too.



"Don't be scared, David! Mommy's here with your crumb of validation."

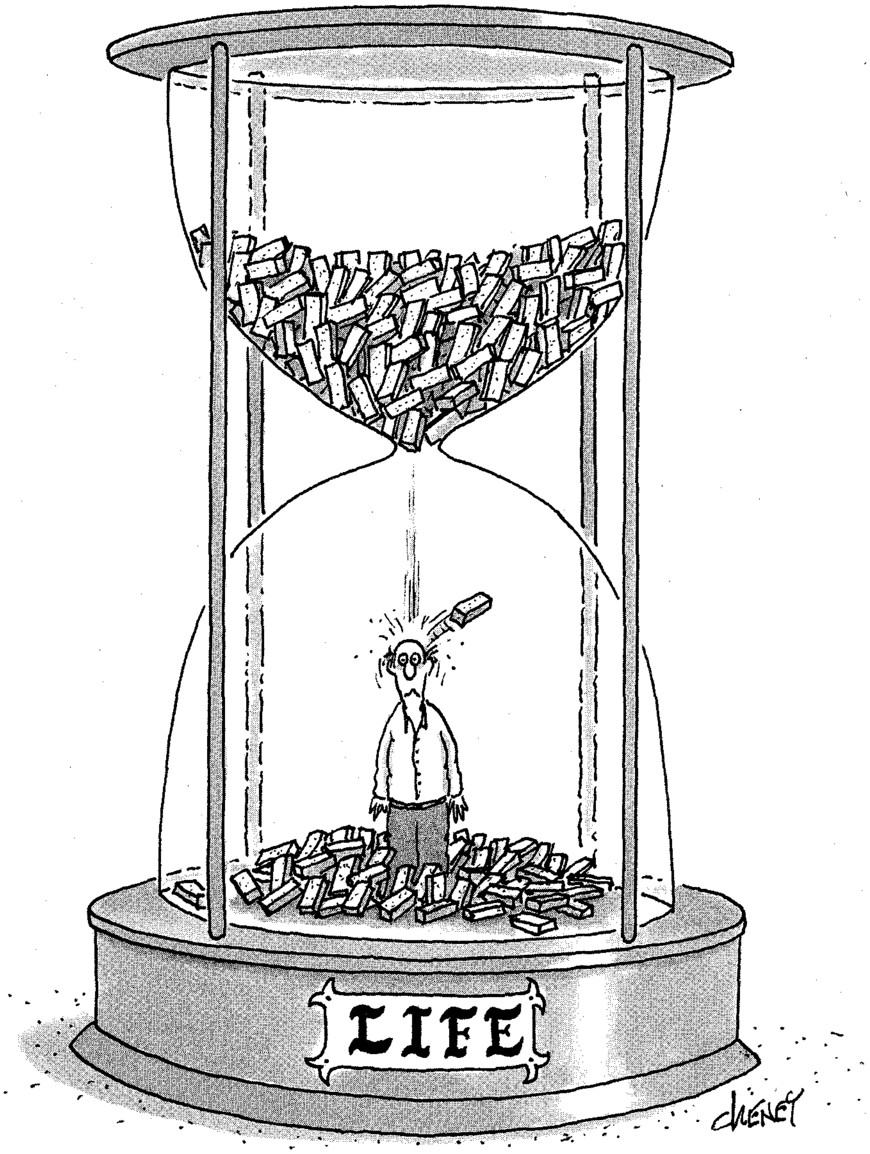
Adhamiya is the temporary home of the 2nd Battalion of the U.S. Army's 3rd Artillery Regiment. The battalion is stationed in a walled complex dominated by a huge, ornate palace that is surrounded by several smaller palaces, including—according to several soldiers—one that had been Uday Hussein's "love shack," a helmet-shaped limestone edifice with delicately painted ceilings and inlaid onyx floors. It is now the battalion commander's living quarters. About half of the main palace is intact, and the other half, which was hit by cruise missiles during the war, is collapsed masonry and rubble. Major Scott Sossaman, the battalion's amiable operations officer, briefed me about its activities. He confirmed that Adhamiya appeared to be a nerve center for the smuggling of weapons to and from places like Ramadi and Fallujah, within the Sunni triangle, where U.S. troops are being killed in drive-by shootings, booby-trap explosions, and rocket attacks. The battalion had twice discovered caches of weapons in the local cemetery. I asked him if the Army knew who was behind the resistance, and he shrugged: "Saddam fedayeen, displaced Baathists, some Islamic extremists, the so-called Army of Muhammad, Wahhabis, maybe some Al Qaeda terrorists, Iranian-backed Shia—who knows? You name it, they're all here."

As an example of the different groups involved in clandestine machinations, Major Sossaman mentioned the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the Shiite organization led by Ayatollah Muhammad Bakr Al-Hakim. Although SCIRI is part of the Iraq Governing Council, the closest thing to an interim government that has been established so far, the organization is, Major Sossaman said, suspected of trying to establish its own turf in Adhamiya through some Shia clerics and the Badr Brigade, its military wing. He said that Iran was likely behind this. What it all came down to was that Adhamiya was regarded as the most hostile territory in Baghdad, as far as the U.S. Army was concerned.

I spent two nights with the 2nd Battalion. On the first night, I arrived at Uday's palace at ten o'clock. Several soldiers in a makeshift command center were poring over military maps and working at laptops in an airless room with plastic sheeting in the spaces where windows had been. The rooms of the palace are huge, and just a couple of plastic fans moved the dank air around. Down some stairs, more soldiers were sleeping on camp cots beneath a beautifully inlaid domed ceiling. Cut-limestone walls were decorated with carved friezes of Koranic scripture. The soldiers had arranged themselves in an arc around the edges of the room, some of them in little hutchlike enclosures made of mosquito netting and camouflage fabric. Their green rucksacks, flak jackets, weapons, boxes, and boots seemed crude amid the Mesopotamian opulence.

The only place to escape the heat was in the rear garden, in Uday's large swimming pool. Soldiers stood in the turquoise water or bobbed around in big black inner tubes. I could hear the sound of weapons firing, probably heavy machine guns, across the river, and saw a few red tracers arcing into the sky. The soldiers in the pool, in the midst of a splashing game, looked up, and one of them, seeing the tracers, exclaimed "Whoa!" but none of them seemed overly concerned, or even very curious, about the shooting. They got out of the pool a little before 3 A.M. to get ready for a raid on a nearby warehouse where they had previously found a big cache of documents and equipment belonging to Saddam's military intelligence organization. One of the battalion's "indigenous intelligence assets" had said that there was still suspicious activity at the warehouse, but the raid didn't turn much up, although it was apparent that someone was still using the place.

I returned to the palace two weeks later. New window frames had been installed in the operations room, which was now air-conditioned. This time, I examined a large mural painted on a wall of the room. Two very American-looking bathing beauties wearing Ray-Bans and bikinis and black leather knee-high platform boots were portrayed lounging seductively at either end of a



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large swimming pool that looked a lot like the one right outside. A palm tree had been painted behind each girl, and the sun rose in the right-hand corner of the mural. An Abrams tank was parked at the edge of the pool between the girls, with its turret pointing forward. The word "Gunners" appeared on a shield next to a palm tree, and at one side, under the words "Major Operations," were the names of the regiment's raids, among them "Bulldog Gangbang," "Big Jism," and "Abu Enema."

Major Sossaman said that the battalion was about to conduct a raid designed to capture a former Mukhabarat officer who was believed to be an organizer of the anti-American guerrilla resistance and a young man who was suspected of assassinating American soldiers. Sossaman showed me an aerial surveillance map of the neighborhood they lived in and pointed to some X's that he said marked the targets' homes. The previous night, the battalion had captured three men, two of whom, he said, were thought to be Al Qaeda members. Sossaman added, quickly, that this was just a suspicion, based on what Iraqi informants were saying. I had noticed that many Americans in Iraq had started to make references to Al Qaeda terrorists when they talked about the attacks on U.S. soldiers, although there seemed to be no evidence for such claims. On the other hand, the Americans in Iraq are obviously an attractive target for Islamic extremists, so the talk of Al Qaeda could turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. In any case, the men the battalion had captured the night before were in what Major Sossaman called "the Pen," a holding cell for prisoners situated somewhere on the palace grounds. They were being interrogated by the "C.I. guys"—counterintelligence men. The suspects hadn't talked yet, he said, but they probably would soon: "It's pretty hot there in the Pen at this time of year."

Sossaman said that most of the men they were nabbing seemed to be former members of Saddam's security apparatus who had become thugs for hire. The word was that before going underground Saddam had left huge sums of money to certain people in Adhamiya, who were now paying to have Americans killed. "We hear the going price for an American is around fifteen hundred bucks," Major Sossaman said. "That's a lot of money for people around here."

Major Sossaman let me examine some intelligence reports, and I copied down the information about one of that night's targets: "Ahmed Naji (aka Sanawi): Fanatic and active Wahhabi/Fedayeen soldier; works closely with the other men on this list, known to have two RPKs"—Russian-made submachine guns—"and two RPGs," rocket-propelled grenades. "Openly brags about killing a lot of Americans and shooting a US soldier in the neck six weeks ago. Drives a white Jawa motorcycle. Reportedly wears 'good shoes' to run away from US forces. 22 years old, thin, dark skin. Possibly abuses illegal drugs."

At around 1 A.M., the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel William Rabena—the officer who sleeps in the canopied bed in Uday's love shack—appeared in the operations room, smoking a cigar. We went outside, and I climbed into the back of his Humvee. He sat in front, next to the driver, and examined a digital color map of our destination on a mounted display screen, then switched it off. We were splitting into two groups, Rabena said. One unit was going to go after the Mukhabarat man, and we would try to grab the assassin nicknamed Sanawi. We glided out of the palace grounds in a long convoy of Humvees and into the streets of Adhamiya. There is still no electricity in Baghdad, except for a few hours of the day, and at night it is an eerily dark place.

It didn't take long to get where we were going, a neighborhood of shabby concrete or mud-covered hovels. We got out of the Humvees, and Rabena motioned to me to follow him and several soldiers who had lights mounted on their assault rifles. We came to an intersection of lanes that was calf deep in raw sewage. Just as it looked as if we were going to have to wade through the mess, some advance scouts appeared and whispered that the target house was in the other direction. Relieved, I followed them down a short alleyway, which was dry but also stank terribly. Soldiers were milling around, and I heard some violent banging noises, then saw that the soldiers had broken into a house on the right-hand side of the alley. They were talking in low voices, and I heard someone wheezing and moaning. An old man was lying on the floor next to a bed. One of the soldiers explained to Rabena that it was not the right house and that the old man appeared to be sick. An Iraqi translator wearing a baseball cap and a red kerchief over his face was sent into the house to straighten things out. Some soldiers farther down the alleyway had gathered around the metal door of a small house on the left. Soldiers hugged the walls on either side of the alley, looking back and forth and up at the rooftops with their guns at the ready.

After more whispering, Rabena gave the order to proceed, and a soldier in front of the metal door kicked it hard, several times, until it buckled, and when it gave way he and several others rushed inside. What followed was very confusing. Two men, one of them shirtless and wearing sweatpants, were dragged outside and made to sit down, legs extended, in the alleyway. The masked translator was brought over to question them. They appeared to be frightened but calm. I could hear the hushed voices of anxious women and children coming from the roof of the house, where families often sleep to keep cool. A soldier whispered to me that the two men had told the translator that the guy they were looking for lived next door, and soon a third door in the alleyway was forced open and some soldiers brought out a thin, gray-haired man in a dish-dash robe and placed him under guard. He said nothing. I could hear the soldiers talking to one another on their two-way radios. They said that there were more women and children on the roof of this house, and also a young man. Rabena gave orders to get the young man, and he told a couple of female soldiers to go up afterward to speak to the women and children.

A few minutes later, the soldiers called out, "We got him," and a thin young man wearing loose trousers was led out of the house. His hands were tied behind his back and he was made to sit on the ground next to the gray-haired man, who was his father. A soldier questioned the young man in English: "Hey, guy, do you abuse drugs?" The young man looked at him sullenly. "No English," he said. Rabena asked the translator to ask him his name, and he replied that it was Ahmed Naji. "That's the right name," Rabena said excitedly, and soon a message came that some running shoes had been found. "Looks like he's our guy," Rabena said, but he told his men to keep searching. I could hear one of them cursing: "It fucking stinks in here, man." I went inside and saw what he meant. The house consisted of only two rooms. Next to the front door, covered by a curtain, was a crude pit latrine.

The soldiers came up with little in the way of further evidence except an old RPK assault rifle and a pair of spare rifle stocks, which didn't mean much, since nearly every Iraqi household has a weapon. There were no RPGs. There was a framed certificate noting that Ahmed Naji's father had served in the Army. Another certificate stated that in 2000 Ahmed had participated in a swimming race across the Tigris River in Tikrit. A soldier appeared carrying a plastic bag containing a lot of electrical fuses and switches. Rabena told him to bring it along. He said that guerrillas were using switches like these to set off mines and explosives.

By now the women on the roof were crying and wailing. A soldier across the alley began shouting, "Shut the fuck up! Shut the fuck up!" and Rabena told him to calm down. It was very hot, and in our flak jackets and helmets we were all soaked with sweat. Rabena looked at his watch and told a soldier to allow the suspect's two neighbors to get off the ground. They got up and began examining their broken door, and Rabena sent the interpreter over to apologize to them, and to tell them that he would send people around in the morning and they would receive compensation for the damage. The suspect was led away, and Rabena told me that he'd be going to the Pen.

We got back in the Humvees and drove over to see how the other unit had fared in its quest for the Mukhabarat man. Outside a row of shuttered shopfronts, several soldiers were questioning a couple of men sitting on the ground. The soldiers had been given the wrong address, it seemed, but they had searched a dozen homes anyway. They had not found their man, although one of the neighbors had given them some new leads. Rabena appeared satisfied with this. He told his soldiers to call it a night, and we all drove back to Uday's palace.

The young Iraqi translator I'd seen during the raid told me that his name was Omar Al-Captain. He was twenty-one years old, and a political-science student at Baghdad University. He was, he said, second on a death list for traitors in Adhamiya. One of his friends, he added, who had been working with the Americans in a similar capacity, had been murdered some days earlier. Omar seemed excited, even proud. "I am No. 2!" he repeated several times. I asked him if he wasn't worried. "Yes, of course!" he said. "Maybe they will kill me!" Why, then, was he doing it? "For money," he replied. "As I told you, I'm a student, and I need the money."

Omar came to my hotel, the Al Safeer, a few days later, looking nervous but smiling broadly. I invited him to have a soft drink in the restaurant off the lobby. Speaking with quaint politeness, and addressing me as "sir," Omar whispered anxiously that he had some news. The previous day, he said, the man who was No. 10 on the Adhamiya death list—a friend of his—had been killed. Grenades had been thrown into the garden of the man's house. Omar pulled out his wallet and removed a folded piece of paper with several lines of Arabic script on it. It was the death list. He pointed out his place on the list and that of the two men who had already been killed. He said that a rough translation of the death sentence would be: "If God doesn't hurt you, we will. And we will go to Heaven if we kill you. You are not a Muslim, you are a traitor and a spy. O Muslims everywhere, if you see these people you must kill them, and you will go to Heaven."

I asked Omar what the Americans were doing to protect him. "Sir, they've said they can't do anything to protect me, but they've said I can keep this pistol with me." He patted the side of his chest. He had a photographer's vest over a shirt, which he unbuttoned, and I glimpsed a revolver in a shoulder holster. "Nine-millimetre CZ, sixteen bullets," he said proudly. A Czech-made gun. He told me that he had moved out of his home and was moving from one cheap hotel to another every few days. He knew of another person on the list, whom he described as a pro-American journalist, who had also left his home, and another, whom he called No. 3, who had moved to Jordan. "They tried to kill No. 18 with AKs, too, but they missed him," Omar said. No. 10, the latest victim, had not even worked for the American military, as he did. "He just sat around in coffeeshops speaking favorably of the Americans, but they thought he was collecting information for them."

Omar said that anonymous letters had been sent to his parents' house. "They say, 'If you don't leave the U.S. soldiers, we will kill you.' So I've told my friends in the neighborhood that I've left. Maybe this will work. Or maybe they will know I am still working." He shrugged. I asked Omar how much the Americans were paying him. He looked embarrassed, and said, "Sir, fifty-six dollars a week, sir." He had Sundays off. He went on duty at nine every night and was off again at 6 A.M., and then, during the day, he went to the university. I said that this sounded like a very hard life. He nodded. "Well, sir, you know, before the soldiers came here, I worked in the summers on building sites and in restaurants, and then I studied in the winter. I worked all day, slept for five or six hours, and I earned only two or three dollars per day." His first year was just ending and he was taking his final exams. He explained that he kept his books with him and studied when he could. He pulled out a copybook from a small shoulder bag in which he also kept a few clothes, a toothbrush, toothpaste, and a bottle of shampoo. "I have everything I need with me, right here." Omar had volunteered his services to the soldiers when they came to Adhamiya in April. At first, he'd translated for them at a gas station they were guarding, and then they offered him a job at Uday's palace.

"In Adhamiya, about seventy per cent of the people are Baathists," Omar said, "and the rest are from Islamic movements. My family is Sunni, but you know, sir, I am just not very religious." His father was a college professor, and his mother worked in a bank, but neither earned much money. He said that his father had always been pro-American and had been telling Omar good things about the United States ever since he was a small boy. Maybe because of this, Omar said, he believed in the Americans and what they were trying to do in Iraq. "I tell my friends that we have to be patient, that Saddam Hussein and his regime ruled Iraq for thirty-five years, and that if we want to see a change it won't happen in three or four months. It may take four or five years." He also liked the Americans he worked with very much, he said. "Right now the soldiers protect me and they help me. There are some who don't trust us translators, who think we're double agents, but most of them are good guys, and I feel like I am with family."

"Maybe you're not underrated."

Omar's dream, he said, was to complete his studies at Baghdad University and then, if he could, go on to Columbia University to study international relations. Perhaps he could work for the United Nations, as a peacekeeper, he said: "Maybe one day I'll get to meet Mr. Kofi Annan!" If not, then he'd like to be a "pressman," like me—working with the BBC or CNN, something like that.

It was nearly eleven, the beginning of the nightly curfew, and I asked Omar where he was going to sleep. He didn't know. The desk clerk at the Al Safeer told me about a hotel nearby that charged only five or six dollars a night, and Omar thanked me profusely for the information. Then he strode off into the darkness.

July 17th was the anniversary of the Baathist coup in 1968 that eventually brought Saddam Hussein to power, and there were rumors that Saddam loyalists would launch a big attack on the Americans that day. Earlier in the week, the new governing council of twenty-five Iraqi leaders from a cross-section of the country's political parties had been sworn in, and there was also tension over that. Many Sunnis were upset that more than half the council members were Shia. But the city was unusually quiet on the seventeenth. The next day, however, a special prayer ceremony was held at the Mother of All Battles Mosque on the western fringes of the city, on the way out of town toward Fallujah. The Mother of All Battles Mosque is set in a moat and has four inner minarets modelled on SCUD missiles and four outer minarets modelled on Kalashnikovs. In a small museum annex, a Koran is exhibited that everyone refers to as the Blood Koran, because it was supposedly written in Saddam's own blood, a feat for which he is said to have donated many pints over a lengthy period of time.

Hundreds of men wearing white skullcaps and robes milled around outside the mosque, trying to position themselves under the few trees and bushes that gave some shade from the midday sun. A short, wiry Imam was speaking to a reporter for an Arab satellite television channel from Abu Dhabi, and I asked Salih what he was saying. "He is telling the people they must resist the American occupation," Salih said.

When the Imam finished speaking to Abu Dhabi TV, Salih asked him to talk to me. The Imam said that he recognized my name. We had not met before, he said, but he knew that I had spoken to one of his uncles, Sheikh Muther Khameez Al-Dhari, just before the war began. He was Dr. Muthana Harith Al-Dhari, an Islamic scholar and a lecturer in Sharia law at Baghdad University. The Dhari clan live in Khandhari, across the road from the Abu Ghraib prison, about twenty-five miles west of Baghdad. They are the descendants of the Sheikh Dhari who became a national hero when he murdered a colonial British officer, Colonel Gerard Leachman, in 1920. Leachman's assassination is regarded as a seminal event in the Arab revolt against the British occupation forces.

I asked Imam Dhari what the day's special prayer ceremony at the mosque was all about. "We will tell the people to desist from sectarianism," he said. "At this time, we should not think of ourselves as Sunni or Shia—we should be one. The governing council has been founded only to divide us." It was necessary for Iraqis to be united, he added, in order to resist the American occupation.

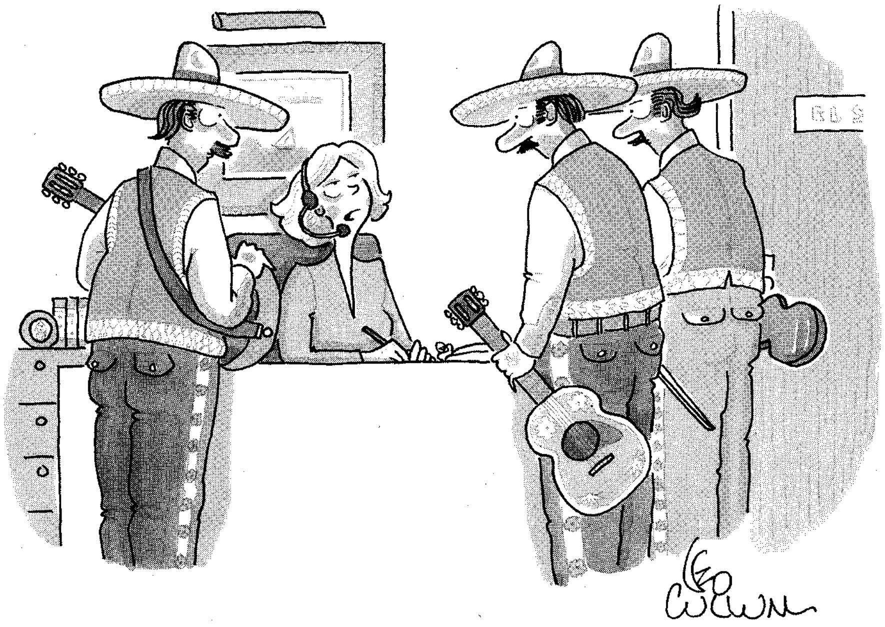
Did he, as a religious man, I said, think this was the right course of action? Yes, he thought so. "As scholars, it is our duty to remind people that they must resist the occupation with all the means they have at their disposal," he said. "We don't tell them to use this option or that. Our people are intelligent and they know what to do." The Imam spoke about Iraqi courage, and we had a rather unsatisfactory exchange about the Iraqi resistance, or lack thereof, to the Americans during the war, and then he excused himself. The prayer ceremony was about to begin, and his father, Imam Harith Al-Dhari, also a religious scholar, was officiating.

I stayed outside the mosque in the sun to listen. Soon an old man's shrieking voice could be heard over speakers. Salih translated for me. Imam Harith Al-Dhari began by recounting a recent outrage, one of many being committed by U.S. troops, who had conducted house-to-house searches in a village. "They even searched the women!" the Imam screamed. "Iraqis! Do you agree with this?"

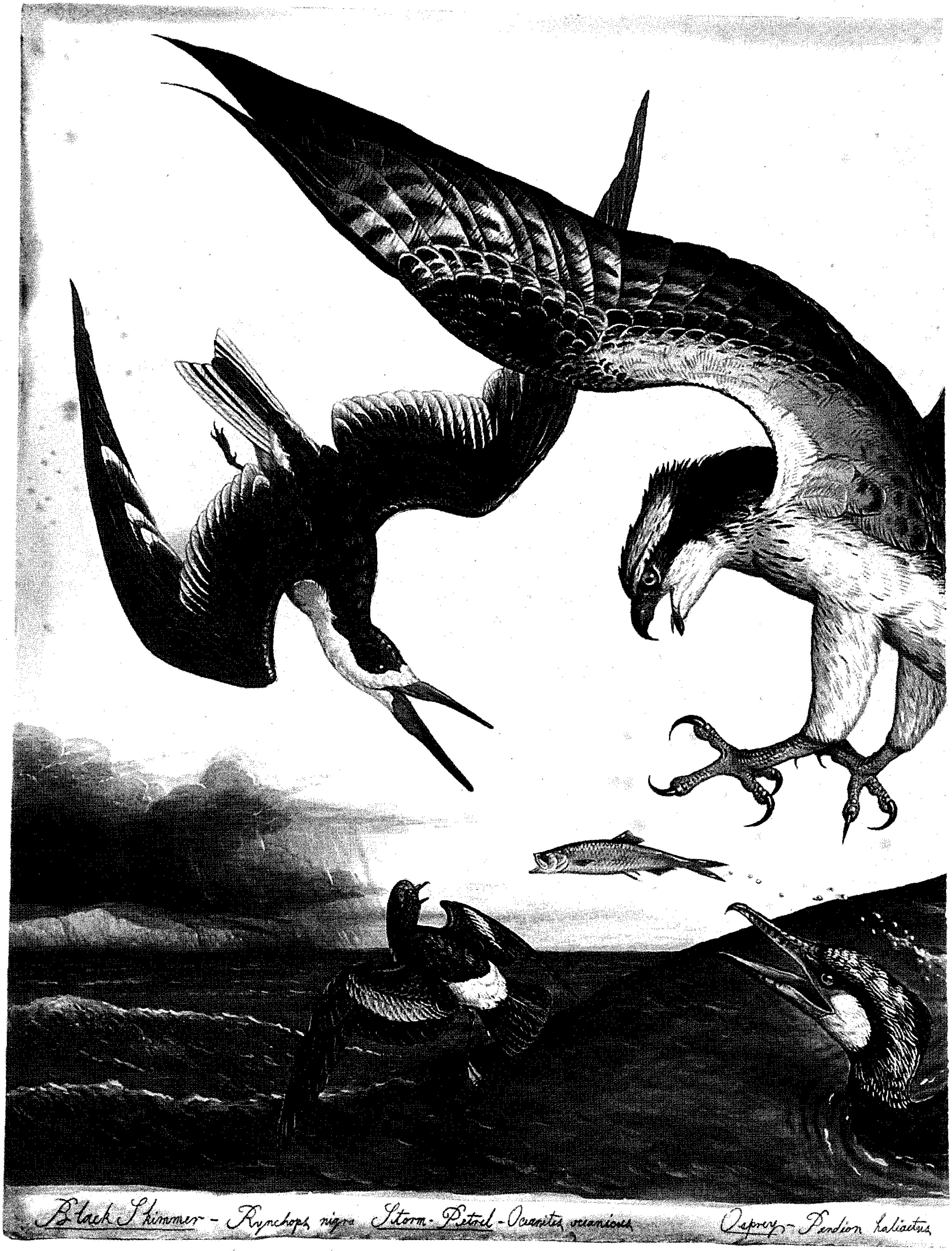
"No!" came the resounding cry. The Imam went on, "Our patience will soon be over. And if they continue to insult the dignity of Iraqis they will see something new from the resistance!" The Imam said that Iraqis knew how to restore their national glory. He cited the 1920 rebellion against the British, during which his ancestor became a heroic figure.

The Imam reminded his audience that in 1920 the Iraqis had not cared whether they were Sunni or Shia. "They thought only of getting rid of the occupiers. Let them go, and we can choose suitable leaders to lead us. Just leave!" He called for a repudiation of the new governing council, warned against revenge killings of suspected Baathists—"Let bygones be bygones"—and bemoaned Iraq's wounded dignity. "Iraqis!" he screamed. "Wake up! Stop sleeping! Be united as you fight against the criminals and looters and those who want this mess to continue."

After prayers and two more speeches, perhaps five or six thousand men poured out of the mosque, chanting, "Down with colonialism," "God is great," and "Down with the occupiers." Despite the appeals against sectarianism, leaflets were handed out challenging the accuracy of the census statistics that gave the Shia the majority of seats on the governing council. The crowd seemed to be



"A word to the wise—he's sick of 'La Bamba.'"


Black Skimmer - Rynchops nigra
Storm-Petrel - Oceanites oceanicus
Osprey - Pandion haliaetus

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY, N.Y.

SKETCHBOOK BY WALTON FORD *False Point, in Montauk Point State Park, is less than a mile north of the Montauk lighthouse,*

False Point
eat Cormorant - Phalacrocorax carbo
Common Tern - Sterna hirundo

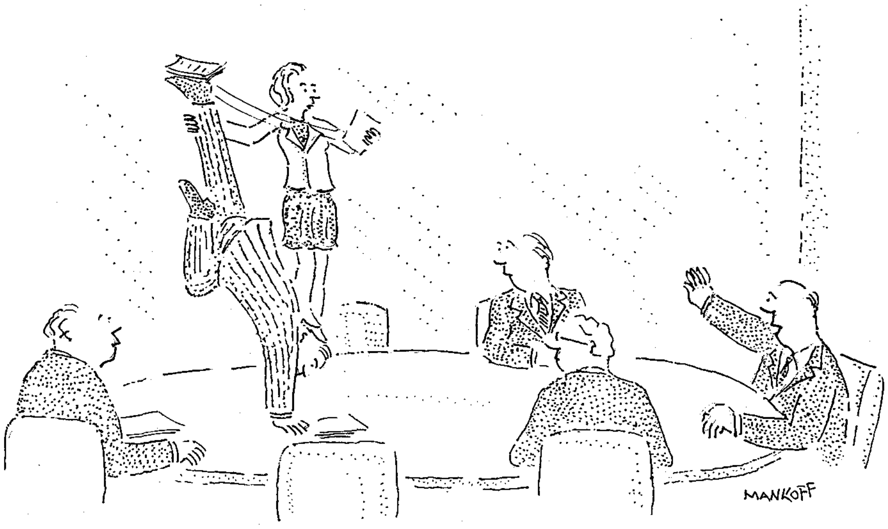
which stands at the easternmost end of Long Island.

very worked up about this issue, and Salih, my translator, and a Sunni, said that he concurred with them: Sunnis were not a one-third minority in Iraq but a two-thirds majority, if the Sunni Kurds were included. The Shia, Salih said, should not be allowed to take power. If they did, they would establish a religious regime like the one in Tehran. One of the speakers, Imam Abdul Salaam Daud Al-Qubeisi, yelled, "We will confront the occupier from the north of Iraq to the south, from Basra and Baghdad, Ramadi and Fallujah!" At the mention of Fallujah, which has become emblematic of the anti-American resistance, there was a huge chorus from the crowd of "Long live the Fallujans!"

Omar came by my hotel the next day, while I was out. He left a message that he'd be back at seven o'clock in the evening. I waited for him until eight, but when he didn't come I went to meet a friend for dinner. The next afternoon, Omar appeared, smiling but looking jumpy. His revolver bulged out of his shirt. He said that, the night before, his taxi had been stopped just down the road from my hotel by five or six men, some of whom were wearing bandannas over their faces. They were shooting Kalashnikovs at cars to get them to stop. They had already forced two cars to the side of the road. Omar's driver had run off, leaving him alone. So Omar had pulled out his gun and started shooting at the highwaymen. "Sir, I am telling you, it was like an action movie!" he said.

Omar and I caught up on other news. Lieutenant Colonel Rabena had raised his salary to seventy dollars a week. And he'd found a small apartment in a quiet neighborhood in downtown Baghdad. The owner had agreed to let him rent it for three months' advance deposit instead of the usual six, which he couldn't afford.

I invited Omar to lunch, but when we went downstairs into the lobby I saw that the desk clerks and the drivers and all the other usual lobby hangers-on were staring at him with alarm. I advised him to find a more discreet way to carry his revolver. He misunderstood me, and thought I'd told him to leave it at home. He patted his side and said, "But, sir, it's my only friend." When I explained what I actually meant, he looked



"O.K., O.K., we get the point."

shocked and promised to conceal it better. But at the restaurant he got stares again, which seemed to please him, in a way, and he joked that people must assume that he was my bodyguard. Over lunch, he told me that he had another dilemma. He was in love with a girl at school, and he wanted to marry her. But she was a Shia and he was a Sunni, and her father was very religious. He had already been to see her father to ask for her hand, and had been refused. Omar had appealed to his own father to speak to the man, but his father had rejected the mission as pointless. Omar threw up his hands, and said, "I don't know what to do."

I asked him if he had thought of eloping with the girl.

"Never," Omar exclaimed, his eyes wide. "There would be big problems between our families. It would cause a war that would never end!" For now, he said, he was content with meeting her on the sly at the university every day. He showed me the picture of a smiling young woman wearing a head scarf. Omar gazed at it lovingly and put it back in his wallet.

Farouk Salloum, a poet from Tikrit whom I had first met on a trip to Iraq in the summer of 2000, came to see me one day. For years, Salloum held various senior posts at Iraq's Ministry of Culture, but his real status derived from the fact that Saddam Hussein liked him and often summoned him to talk about poetry and culture, and to recite poetry for him. In fact, Salloum became (unwillingly, according to several of his close friends) something like Saddam's pet poet. I had last seen Salloum in mid-March, on the eve of the war, when he invited me to a dinner party at his home. He had played his lute and sung sad songs, and had told his guests that the next day he was sending his young wife—a beautiful former ballerina—and their daughter, a toddler, out of the country. They would be going to Damascus, he said, while he himself was leaving on an official visit to Spain. I suspected that he would not be coming back.

We drank Turkish coffee in the lobby of the Al Safeer, and Salloum confirmed that he had spent the war in Damascus with his wife and child. He had returned to Baghdad at the end of April, and had immediately presented himself to the American authorities. "They knew of me, of course—they had a security profile of me," he said, smiling with embarrassment. "And they knew I was not a Baathist. I had been one, until 1991, but then I gave up my Party membership."

The Americans had authorized him to resume his old job for the time being, he said, and they had given him a credential—which he pulled out of his shirt pocket to show me—that gave him access to the Coalition Provisional Authority headquarters. He was still officially the director of music and dance at the Ministry of Culture, and was receiving his old salary, so things weren't all that bad. But Salloum didn't know how long this would last. "I understand that the Ministry will be dissolved," he said, "and that there will be an arts council or something in its stead."

I was interested in hearing what Salloum really thought of Saddam Hussein, since we were speaking freely for the first time ever. He nodded uncomfortably. "You know, for the past ten years it has been a kind of nightmare," he said, "because Saddam changed after 1991"—after the first Gulf War. "He lost his feeling for humanity." Salloum trailed off, and I didn't press him to go on. I asked him, instead, how he was adjusting to the new Iraq. He said that he was dismayed by some of the changes, especially by the many "new Iraqis" on the streets of Baghdad, the returned refugees and exiles, and the poor people who have poured in from the outlying slums and the countryside to live as squatters in the abandoned homes and apartments of regime apparatchiks. "When I see their faces, what I see are the peasants of Sumeria, and they should return to the land," he said. "They are looters, thieves!" He thought that the Americans were insufficiently in touch with the educated class, and he blamed the Shia for most of the current violence. "The resistance is a combination of Al Qaeda and Shia religious fundamentalists backed by Iran," he said. Salloum said he hoped things would work out with the Americans—anything was better than the religious fundamentalists—but he wasn't very optimistic.

While he was abroad, during the war, Salloum said, he gave an interview to the BBC in which he said something about Saddam being the past and the Americans being the future. Tikriti friends had let him know that Saddam had heard the broadcast and felt betrayed. Salloum said that he was a target of Shia radicals in the northeastern Baghdad slum of Thawra, formerly Saddam City. "I have heard that in the Imam Ali Mosque in Thawra my name is on the wall as someone to be assassinated," he said. I noticed that he was accompanied by a bodyguard, a heavyset man who sat nearby as we spoke.

A week later, I went to lunch at Salloum's house, which was still adorned with modern Iraqi art. As usual, he had laid on a feast. There was a cold buffet of Iraqi salads and delicacies—fartoush, hummus, tabbouleh—and wine and whiskey, and afterward roast lamb and *masgouf*, huge river fish grilled on coals. Among the other guests was a poet in her mid-thirties who had returned from eight years in exile in Berlin, she said, and was trying to found a German-Iraqi cultural institute in Baghdad. There was also a corpulent man named Adel Al-Sheikhly who had been in Great Britain since the nineteen-seventies and was now working with the Coalition Provisional Authority at Baghdad's city hall. Salloum introduced him to me, only half-jokingly, I thought, as "Baghdad's new mayor." There was a thin, chain-smoking psychiatrist, Dr. Baher Sami Raphael Butti, who had been a Baath Party member, and who had not been in exile. He was trying to start a foundation, for the purpose, as he put it, of discussing social issues and "creating better understanding between Iraqis and Americans." Ibrahim Zubeidi, another former exile, had been a childhood friend of Saddam's, and was now working, like Sheikhly, with the Coalition. Salloum mingled affably with everyone. At one point, he played his lute, but only two melodies, and he didn't sing, as he usually did.

I had met one of the guests, Amal Al-Khadeiri, a handsome woman in her sixties, several times before the war began, and then lost track of her. Amal is from a wealthy landowning family. Her father, an ardent nationalist, was exiled to India by the British in the nineteen-thirties. Amal was educated in London, Switzerland, and Beirut, had married a prominent Iraqi lawyer, and taught French and Arabic literature at Baghdad University. She had been retired for several years, and widowed, but she remained an active figure in Baghdad's cultural scene.

Amal had restored a yellow brick Ottoman-era house on Abu Nawas Street, overlooking the Tigris, and turned it into a salon and art gallery, full of collectibles and bric-a-brac—ornate old wooden doors and windows, carpets and Oriental lamps and coffeepots. She spent her days in the gallery, receiving visitors. We would sit and talk in wicker chairs in the shaded passageway that ran behind the wooden pillars of her courtyard garden. She had been extremely critical of the United Nations sanctions against Iraq and deeply resentful of the United States. I noticed that she never mentioned Saddam Hussein, and the last time we'd met I had asked her opinion of him. "There is something Americans never understand," she had said. "And that is that this President is from these people, and he understands them. He shares their values. This country needs to be ruled with firmness, you know. And this firmness needs a little bit of cruelty." Amal's family had lost much of their property in Saddam's land reforms, but she defended him nevertheless.

A few days after Baghdad collapsed, as the city was being ransacked by looters, I passed by Amal's gallery and saw that it had been plundered. Now I told her how sorry I was that she had lost so much. It was terrible, she agreed, but not half as bad as what had happened in the National Museum and the Library. She told me, with a shrug, that she had also lost her savings, her jewelry, and her family heirlooms, which had been in the vault of a bank that was robbed. She blamed the Americans for the destruction of Baghdad and spoke very critically about them, about how they knew no Arabic and were ignorant of Iraq's history and culture. Amal invited me to come for breakfast later in the week at her home in Shamasiya, a residential district just north of Adhamiya, so that we could talk further.

I fell into conversation with Adel Al-Sheikhly, the "mayor," which was like landing on a different planet after listening to Amal. Sheikhly was delighted about being back in Baghdad. "I hear people complain about everything," he said. "The lack of electricity, of water, the dirty streets, unemployment, and so forth. But things could be worse. Anyway, these things will be solved. What is important is that we are free. I am excited about the future, about being here in my own homeland."

The psychiatrist, Dr. Butti, on the other hand, was full of conspiracy theories concerning the American occupation. He spoke about the widespread belief in a Zionist plot to annex Iraq, and about how the Americans seemed to be going along with this, and also about

"He's not a bad person, but he wants to own two TV stations in the same market."

how they had orchestrated the looting of Baghdad, presumably as part of the plot. He said many people believed that there was no anti-American resistance at all. The daily grenade attacks and mine explosions were being carried out by C.I.A. agents, as part of a covert operation to justify prolonging the U.S. military occupation. I became irritated with Butti's fantasies, and Farouk Salloum pulled out his lute and began strumming, calling out with a laugh that he was doing so in order to distract me from "politics."

A couple of days later, I visited Amal for breakfast in her big brick house in Shamasiya, which has a lovely garden that overlooks the Tigris. A row of orange and red lilies grew along a metal boundary fence, and a large pink bougainvillea climbed halfway up a wall. We ate inside, where she had laid out a Lebanese breakfast of tea, flat bread, honey, *zatar*—a paste of thyme and sesame seeds—yogurt, white cheese, and olives. Afterward, we sat in a shaded corner of the garden. I asked her if she was optimistic about the future. She frowned. "I don't know," she said. "Normally I am, but I don't know this time." She pointed across the river, where I could see what looked like a U.S. Army camp in a large orchard of date palms. "Look what they have done! Before, it had been turned into an officers' club, and those of us who lived here didn't like that and we complained about it, but at least we didn't have to see tanks and things." At night, she said, they turned on powerful lights that beamed across the river, illuminating everything, and she found it hard to sleep.

I was curious to see if Amal would speak differently about Saddam now. "Let's not say it was all bad," she said, when I asked. She spoke of how Saddam had modernized Iraq, and mentioned the wonderful new highways that had been built. I said that she sounded like the Italians who praised Mussolini for making the trains run on time, but she ignored me. She talked about a trip to Kurdistan she had made in the early eighties with her children, how good the new roads were, and how safe and beautiful it had all seemed. "Until 1991, I thought he could still do some good things, and even afterward, but it didn't turn out that way." Somewhat shocked, I asked Amal, "What about the Anfal campaign?"—when Saddam sent his Army to raze Kurdish villages, and killed tens of thousands of civilians with guns and poison gas. "Even after that, you were O.K. with what he was doing?" Amal nodded. "You know, the Kurds are a difficult people, and can be quite cruel themselves," she said. "I know, I have a Kurdish grandmother." She laughed and began talking about the Kurdish persecution of Christians, and how, if I liked, she could introduce me to many Christians in Baghdad who had been forced to flee the Kurds. "One day, you'll have to hear the whole story," she said.

I asked Amal how she felt about Uday's and Qusay's deaths. She looked glum, and didn't reply. I mentioned that people around my hotel had gone crazy when they heard the news, and that dozens of guns had been fired into the air in celebration. "It may have been a mixed thing, you know," she said. "In Iraq, they shoot at weddings and also at funerals." She added, "Uday was sick. He couldn't even walk properly. They didn't have to shoot him. They should have done it some other way. He should have been caught and made to stand trial. Why must they always do things that make war against the Iraqi people? Couldn't they have uprooted or killed Saddam Hussein before, in some other way?"

Amal said that she was thinking of going to Switzerland or the Czech Republic for the mineral baths and the cool mountain weather. She needed to relax, she told me, to get away from Baghdad's summer heat and the American soldiers and their tanks and those lights of theirs that prevented her from sleeping at night. As she spoke, a din drowned out her voice: two American patrol boats full of soldiers were speeding up the river past us, carving a white trough in the lime-green water.

Victoria Roberts

"I think Italian is spoken in Heaven and Dutch is spoken in Hell."

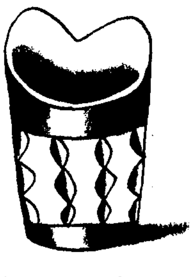
Around sunset one evening in late July, I was in a car an hour south of Baghdad when a friend called me on my satellite phone. He said that Al Jazeera was broadcasting a news flash that U.S. tanks had surrounded a house in Mansour, an upscale Baghdad neighborhood, and that several cars were in flames. It sounded as if the Americans thought they might have tracked down Saddam.

By the time I arrived in Mansour, there were no American troops or tanks or burning cars to be seen, but I saw scorch marks and broken glass on the street. A couple of dozen Iraqis were gathered on the sidewalk outside the Al Saah restaurant, where I had eaten many times in the days before the war. Four bunker busters had been dropped on the neighborhood in early April, but the Al Saah had been repaired by its owners and had reopened.

An agitated-looking young man named Jassim who had seen the most recent attack attempted to explain to me what had happened. As he told it, a large group of American troops had arrived in the neighborhood at around 7 P.M. and had stormed a house just down the street that belonged to Prince Rabiyah Amin, a grand sheikh from Mosul. They had come in Humvees and armored vehicles and also civilian cars, Jassim said. Some of them were in ordinary Army uniforms, but there were others in camouflage, and also a group wearing a style of dress he had never seen before—black flak jackets and black kneepads over their khakis and a distinctive patch sewn onto their shoulders. He described it as looking like the silhouette of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. (An Army spokesman later identified the soldiers as members of Task Force 20, which is leading the hunt for Saddam Hussein.) Jassim paused and asked me if I was American. When I said that I was, he said that he had seen many American movies, and that he understood that when a cat was trapped in a tree everybody, policemen and firemen, climbed ladders to save it. So why did the Americans treat the Iraqis so badly? He waved his arms indignantly.

We walked past the Al Saah, and Jassim pointed to a small blue car next to a stand of trees about two hundred feet ahead of us. He said that was where the Americans had guarded the road while the home of the Sheikh was being stormed. Jassim said that they had blocked the road with the blue car. As he stood watching, what he thought was a taxi had come down the lane toward the soldiers, and one of them had shouted to the driver, in English, "Stop your fucking car!" Apparently confused about who was shouting at him, for it was twilight and he probably hadn't yet spotted the soldiers in the distance, the driver had slowed the car, but the soldiers had opened fire anyway, killing him and his passengers, a woman and her teen-age son. Jassim gestured toward a mess of broken glass in the street at our feet. "This is where they were killed," he said.

Another car had come from the other direction and had been similarly shot up, Jassim said. That attack had been too far away for him to see, but he had heard the gunshots, and had been told that the driver of the car had been killed, and another person as well. He gestured toward the car-sized scorch marks I'd seen in the lane opposite the Al Saah, and told me that the soldiers had destroyed several cars parked there, which had burst into flames. "They fired not just one or two bullets—they fired everything, on automatic, long bursts," Jassim said. He made machine-gun sounds, and, with his hands clasped together and arms extended, made a spraying motion. He said that the shooting was wild and went on for at least twenty seconds. The driver of another car, which was now parked on the main street with bullet holes in its windshield, had also been wounded. Jassim walked me back down the lane and around the corner to the front windows of the Al Saah and showed me where he had thrown himself down on the pavement, and where, in the window of the restaurant just above his head, a bullet had gone through the glass.



Jassim said that when it was all over the Americans had got in their vehicles and sped away. We had been joined by a middle-aged man and a serene-looking older man who was wearing a kaffiyeh head scarf and a gray dish-dash robe and was fingering some prayer beads. Both nodded in agreement as they listened. Jassim said that the Americans had taken the bodies of the woman and the boy with them but left the bullet-riddled body of the taxi-driver in his seat. He and his friends had pulled it out of the car.

Soon afterward, he told me, some other American soldiers had come and used a crane and a flatbed truck to haul away the destroyed vehicles. As we said goodbye, Jassim said he hoped that I hadn't taken offense at his earlier remark about the behavior of Americans. He knew that there were good Americans and bad Americans, just as there were good and bad Iraqis. "But, please, I would like to know," he said. "How do Americans think of us? As Iraqis, or as animals?"

The Americans did seem to have become increasingly brutal in the last weeks of July, as they felt they were closing in on Saddam. Perhaps they, like Amal, believed that Iraqis must be dealt with cruelly if they are to be made to behave. Perhaps fear—and millions of dollars in reward money—would induce someone to betray Saddam. And, indeed, it might. But violence wasn't the exclusive provenance of the United States. In addition to the widely publicized killing of U.S. soldiers by assassins who might be Baathists, or old members of Saddam's security guard, or militant Shia, or even, as the Americans seem to take for granted, some version of Al Qaeda jihadis, there were revenge killings of Baathists by their old enemies. A prominent doctor who had treated Saddam was murdered in his clinic recently, and a few days earlier another doctor, whose crime had been to treat Uday, narrowly escaped assassination.

Iraqi culture is tribal, with tribal notions of honor and revenge, and this is at the heart of the disappointment many Iraqis seem to feel about the killing of Uday and Qusay. An Iraqi friend told me that he had hoped to see Uday confess his crimes on television. He also said that if the bodies of Saddam's sons were handed over to their relatives for burial they would most likely be dug up and torn to pieces the next day. Iraqis feel frustrated and humiliated. They got to throw some shoes at Saddam's statues, but they haven't been able to enjoy the catharsis of watching Saddam's henchmen suffer, since the Americans are keeping the Baathist officials they arrest incommunicado, where not even their families or the Red Cross can get to them. Caught up in chaos and uncertainty, their daily lives in many ways worse than they were under Saddam, the Iraqis have turned their anger on the Americans.

"What exactly do the Americans want?" an Iraqi journalist who returned home after spending thirty years in exile in Russia said to me. "They should leave, although not right away, since that could lead to a civil war or even allow the Baathists to return to power. Nevertheless, it is difficult for me, as an Iraqi in my own country, to be asked 'Where is your ID?' at a U.S. Army checkpoint. It would be more palatable if an Iraqi policeman did this. The Americans do not make it easy for us, and they should know that without the Iraqis they can do nothing here." ♦

U.S. JOURNAL

THE HAVES AND THE HAVES

A wealthy town mobilizes against a threat to its way of life.

BY MARK SINGER

NORFOLK, CONNECTICUT

I feel slightly guilty mentioning that, earlier this year, *Connecticut Magazine's* annual survey of towns with populations under five thousand rated Norfolk, a Berkshires village in northern Litchfield County, the most livable in the state. This is an accolade that would, of course, delight any chamber of commerce, except that Norfolk happens not to have one—a function of a lack of commerce rather than a lack of civic spirit, which Norfolk possesses in abundance. Unlike the boosters in other ostensibly charming New England communities within weekend-commuting reach of New York City, however, many Norfolk citizens give the impression that it would suit them fine if their town, twenty miles east of the New York state line and five miles south of Massachusetts, disappeared from road maps. The timing of the publication of the *Connecticut* survey—February, with several weeks of a particularly brutal winter still ahead—did offer some consolation: come spring, it was hoped, readers might not remember. A Norfolk retiree who logs weather data has urged me to point out that on June 2nd the temperature was thirty-eight degrees.

Usually, at this point in midsummer, casual conversations in Norfolk incline toward a predictable and reassuring range of topics: mosquito woes, black-bear sightings, preparations for the annual fair at the Congregational Church and the book sale at the Norfolk Library, critiques of the chamber-music concerts at the old Battell Stoeckel estate (now owned by Yale University). The white eighteenth-century church, the red stone library, and the crenellated brick wall that borders the Yale property all adjoin Norfolk's triangular village green. At one end of the green is a faux-vintage mileage marker that notes the distances to Winsted, Hartford, Torrington, and Goshen and offers an implicit invitation to keep moving.

But the temptation is to stick around, whether for reasons of affinity or anthropological curiosity. Much of the money in Norfolk (and there's much money in Norfolk) is old, lineally descended from nineteenth-century industrial fortunes. By the turn of the century, Norfolk had established itself as a white-shoe summer retreat. It attracted the gentry from New York, Hartford, and Boston, plus the occasional Philadelphia banker or Pittsburgh steel magnate, as well as tuberculosis sufferers whose doctors had prescribed the air at the highest-altitude town in Connecticut. The winter population (1,700) still doubles during July and August, but the summer hotels have long since burned down or been demolished. While a fair number of Gilded Age trophy homes survive, ostentation is nowadays deemed a cardinal violation of the social code.

Generously spaced along the shady lanes that radiate from the village green, or else partially obscured along unpaved roads that wind through dense woods, are handsome, roomy but unassuming Colonial, Georgian, Victorian, and Adirondack-style houses. What defines Norfolk as much as its graceful architecture is its natural milieu. Eighty per cent of the town's thirty thousand acres has been designated as forest, agricultural, or tax-exempt land (including four state parks). In an era of naked and shameless real-estate lust, Norfolk is an anomalous throwback, a place where the phrase "conservation easement" gets uttered with what seems like lubricious enthusiasm. Over all, the ambience and physical details render a rare distillation of haute-Yankee style—the unmistakable trappings of a real-deal Wasp preserve (not to be confused with, say, the Ralph Lauren variety). The poet James Laughlin, who was also the publisher of the New Directions imprint, lived and worked in Norfolk for almost sixty years; his friend, biographer, and fellow-poet Hayden Carruth composed a collection titled "The Norfolk Poems." In "A Short-Run View," Carruth wrote:

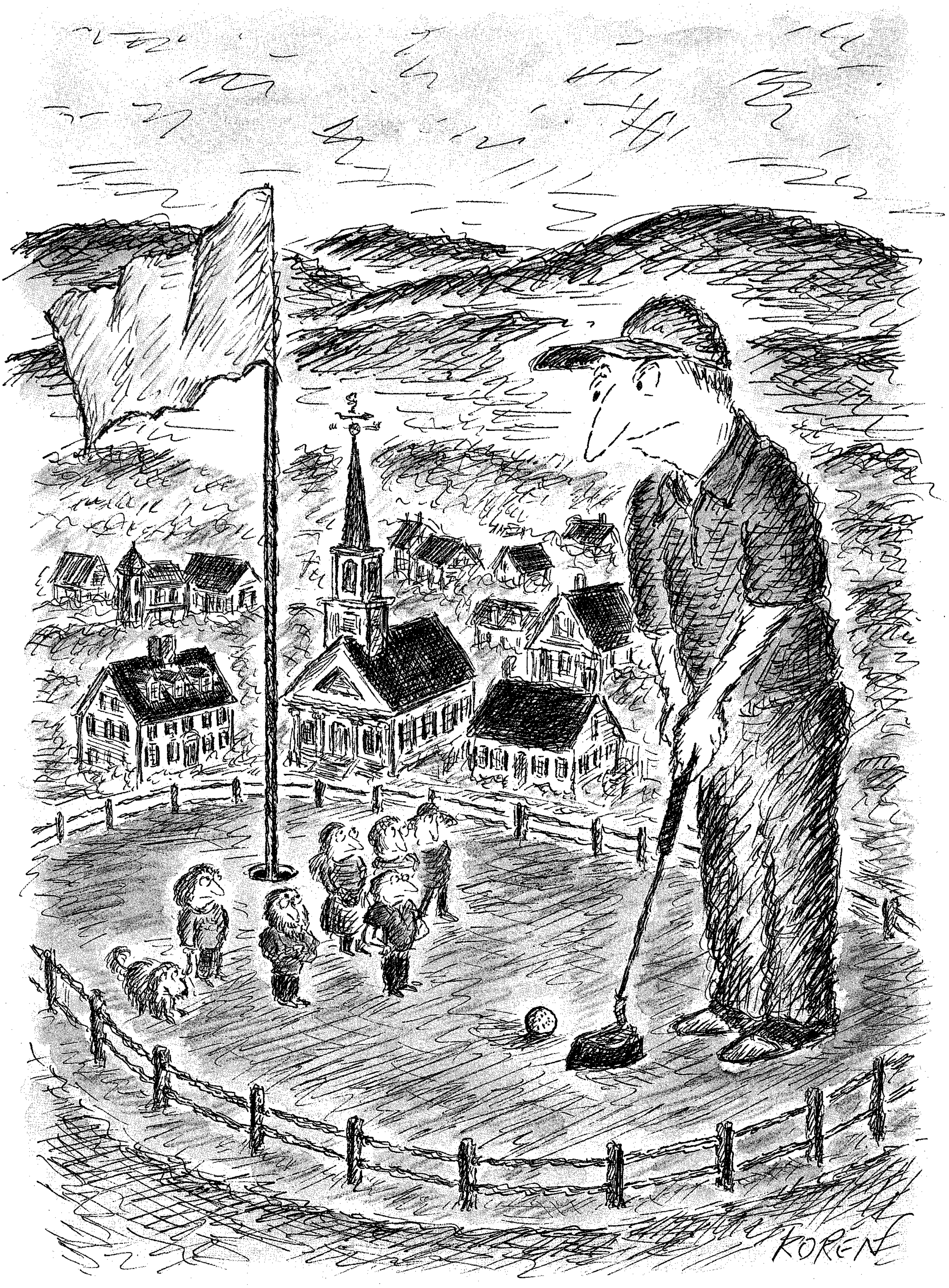
> There are a number
> Of millionaires in Norfolk, which adds a
>   good deal
> To the scenery, but also a number of
>   people who are
> Content not to be millionaires, which
>   adds even more.

Norfolk is home to many varieties of artistes and aesthetes, among them sundry born-lucky folks who don't have to work a forty-hour week to get by and whose gratitude for their inheritance manifests itself as a potent desire to maintain the town, and the rhythm of their lives, just as is. Whenever change occurs in Norfolk, it tends to get scrutinized down to its molecular particulars.

Recently, a couple of macroscopic alterations to the landscape have occurred. Last month, a pizza place relocated, shifting two hundred yards, from next door to a liquor store—one of Norfolk's half-dozen or so retail businesses—to a spot on Route 44, the main thoroughfare. And the granite Battell Memorial Fountain, which in warm weather burbles at the southern end of the green, has been out of commission ever since it got whacked by a truck. Otherwise, Norfolk looks exactly as it did a year ago (and the year before that and the year before that). Take away the Volvos, Saabs, and Subarus, and the clock might have stopped circa 1955 or, plausibly, 1925.

Which belies the fact that, for several months, among a large segment of the populace, reassuringly predictable casual conversations have been superseded by anxious speculation that the whole place is at risk of going to hell. A high-dollar land-development scheme has been proposed for Norfolk and, in classic Not In My Back Yard fashion, has provoked an alarmed response from the community's self-anointed conservators. Unlike most NIMBY conflicts, however, the source of the distress isn't a proposed rehab clinic or

EDWARD KOREN



Opponents see the golf course as the beginning of the end—a violation of the environment for the benefit of nouveau-riche boors.

industrial polluter. Oddly, for a place with a long history of devotion to genteel leisure, the perceived lethal weapon aimed at Norfolk's soul is a luxury golf course.

The offstage villain in this story—or, perhaps, more catalyst than villain; in any event, *way* offstage—is Gamil al-Batouti, the EgyptAir pilot who, on Halloween, 1999, deliberately crashed a jet bound from New York to Cairo into the Atlantic Ocean. Of the two hundred and seventeen people who died, three were from Norfolk, including Henrietta Mead, one of the town's most beloved citizens. Henny Mead had settled in Norfolk in 1958, the year she married Robin Mead, who was a grandson of Helen Hartley Jenkins, a summer resident from 1898 until her death, in 1934. "One of the wealthiest women in the country" was how one history of Norfolk described Jenkins, whose father, Marcellus Hartley, founded the Union Metallic Cartridge Company, which later became the Remington Arms Company. Though she had formidable competition, Jenkins was one of Norfolk's grandest dames. "The townspeople of her day often misinterpreted her actions"—no doubt because she appeared to work at cross-purposes. When she wasn't acquiring old farmsteads in her capacity as an "avid conservationist," she was buying antiquated factory buildings and tearing them down "to rid the town of its traces of industry." Eventually, her holdings exceeded fifteen hundred acres, including a three-hundred-acre parcel that, in 1732, had been deeded by the Connecticut General Assembly to the then fledgling Yale College.

Well before Robin Mead received his inheritance—following the death of his mother, Jenkins's daughter—this real estate and several contiguous properties were collectively known as Yale Farm. For most of his adult life, Robin taught at a private school in nearby Salisbury. Summers he spent at the farm, clearing fields with his brush hog and tending a herd of Polled Hereford cattle. In his early fifties, he retired from teaching, became a gentleman farmer, and, in a community that placed a premium upon volunteerism, chaired the planning-and-zoning commission. In 1992, the Meads sold more than eight hundred acres to a single buyer. When, six years later, Robin died of cancer, at sixty-five, Yale Farm—seven hundred and eighty acres, about one-fifth in pasture and cornfields and the rest in hemlock, pine, and hardwood forest—and its buildings had an appraised value of almost eight million dollars. The EgyptAir crash occurred a year and a half later. That Henny was only sixty-three years old and in good health explains why her immediate survivors—three sons, Robert, Slade, and Winter—weren't prepared to deal with the tax implications and ancillary complications of settling her estate. In twenty years, maybe, but not so soon after the death of their father. Slade recalls that at his mother's funeral he was approached by, and appalled by, a real-estate developer.

Not that no one else in Norfolk had considered the possibility that Yale Farm, or some portion of it, might come on the market. The Mead boys had inherited enough cash and securities to pay estate taxes, but they were left with a valuable, expensive-to-maintain asset that yielded very little income. Robert and Winter were both teachers, and Slade was a professional sports agent; all three had left Connecticut. Before long, Robert announced that he wanted to be bought out, but he agreed to give Slade a year to devise a strategy for the disposition of the property.

About two-thirds of Yale Farm fell within the boundaries of Norfolk, and the balance was in North Canaan. As Slade was trying to come up with a development plan that wouldn't offend the neighbors (something other than a cookie-cutter housing subdivision), he happened upon a copy of the 1999 North Canaan town report: a light-bulb-over-head moment. North Canaan has a distinct blue-collar identity, but for some reason the report was illustrated with photos of golfers. That Slade himself had little interest in golf didn't stop him from suddenly envisioning fairways where the cattle had grazed. And, as long as the bulldozers were revved up, how about a hundred four-acre homesites on the course perimeter?

Slade conferred with golf-course developers around the country, including one in Phoenix, where he lived. The consensus was that Yale Farm, with its diverse topography, broad meadows, mature trees, and plentiful water sources—not to mention its proximity to New York, Albany, and Hartford—had excellent potential. Opinions varied about what to construct along with the golf course. The Phoenix developer, evidently inspired by the notion of networking in a woodland setting, talked about a conference center instead of private homes. Someone else proposed a multisport resort. Most developers discussed buying Yale Farm outright, but Slade wanted to establish an ongoing partnership; he figured he could make more money that way and also influence the design. He was especially concerned about the homestead, which his paternal grandparents had built in 1938. Slade imagined it as a clubhouse or, better yet, a guesthouse, where Mead family members might stay during summer visits.

One afternoon in the spring of 2001, a friend phoned from the Denver airport. The friend had just got off a flight where, fortuitously, he had been seated next to Roland Betts, the creator and developer of Chelsea Piers, the immense sports-and-entertainment complex on the Hudson River in lower Manhattan. It turned out that Betts owned a weekend house in North Canaan, played about forty rounds of golf a year—all over the world, with a four handicap—and was eager to hear Slade's pitch. When they met in New York a few weeks later, the result was mutual enthusiasm. The resort or conference-center concept didn't grab Betts, but he could foresee a large number of ten-acre house lots and he was willing to preserve the homestead. For Betts, much of the appeal, clearly, lay in the challenge of building something he'd never previously attempted. Chelsea Piers had been his first venture as a developer and it had succeeded grandly, both as urban amenity and business proposition. What he had in mind for Yale Farm wasn't a mere golf course but a world-class golf course, a links that could someday be mentioned in the same breath as Augusta National and Pebble Beach, with a cachet that would entice members who would be delighted to pay an initiation fee of a hundred thousand dollars or more.

It wasn't only what Betts had to say

TORN SASH

To each his colors: mauve, and yellow. And

cruelty, at most, only what we thought it was:
perhaps not unnecessary—there's nothing
useless—cruelty as a means of understanding,
if not absolutely, then more forcefully than not,
love's conditions—not clear,

but clearer. Stars,
but only if refracted first, reassembled into lit
beadwork, a net veiling the faceless water's
veiled face, what the waves, like a memory of

waves—like memory—keep at once refusing,
and never quite let go of . . . Let a silence be

configured around what hurts most; around
that, a style pitched subtly between distraction
and an indifference, cool, ambitious, by which
the events of story rise steadily,

now history,
soon a legend that—forever, it seems—both
revises itself and is itself revised: *They agreed*
to swear to have remembered nothing—and this
was true, or it was for one of them, though to

all appearances equally each forgave the other.

—*Carl Phillips*

that excited Slade's optimism but who he was and who he knew. Before Chelsea Piers, he had organized a series of investment partnerships that financed scores of Hollywood movies, among them "Outrageous Fortune," "The Color of Money," and "Escape from New York." (Before that, he practiced entertainment law.) He had a reputation for enriching not only himself but his partners, most famously when he assumed a lead role in the 1989 purchase of the Texas Rangers baseball franchise. That deal had an incalculable domino effect: Betts netted more than twenty million dollars when the Rangers were sold, nine years later, and his old Yale fraternity chum and best friend, George W. Bush, parlayed an up-front stake of six hundred thousand dollars into fifteen million. Along the way, Bush had established himself in Texas as a seemingly successful businessman and viable political candidate.

One can easily picture Slade's gears turning: He was a sports agent who represented baseball players, and Betts knew lots of people in the world of baseball. A Republican, Slade was contemplating a run for the Arizona state senate; having a business partner whose best friend was the tenant of the White House couldn't hurt, could it? As soon as a partnership agreement was signed—Slade and Betts would become co-general partners, but Betts would handle most of the details—the Meads would no longer bear the burden of Yale Farm's taxes or of its maintenance costs. Betts would line up the other investors, who would eventually kick in twenty million dollars; the Meads would contribute the land but no cash. Once the technical plans were drafted, formal approvals from state and federal regulators and from the planning-and-zoning and inland-wetlands commissions in both Norfolk and North Canaan would be necessary before a shovelful of dirt could be moved. This process could take years, but it would be worth the wait. In the end, Slade figured, he and his brothers stood to make far more than they'd inherited. And, instead of being land poor, they'd be cash rich.

Slade now says he assumed that the plans for Yale Farm Golf Club would trigger modest resistance, "because there's always a group against any sort of change." Possibly, his anticipation of a bonanza clouded his judgment, or maybe living in Arizona allowed him to lose sight of how a large-scale luxury anything aimed at wealthy outsiders would viscerally offend people in Norfolk and the Canaan Valley. Betts has said of the antagonism, "The whole thing has me astounded." One senses that members of the opposition camp have surprised even themselves with their vehemence. The fight against the golf course, it seems, has given a lot of people in Norfolk a renewed raison d'être, a chance to affirm their shared values and, in the bargain, to infuse their lives with some otherwise missing drama. In the process, a narrative has evolved in which Slade and his brothers have been reduced to minor roles—regarded as casualties, certainly, of their own cupidity but mainly as dupes of Betts, who has been cast as a manipulative opportunist. "The Mead boys are going to lose both ways," one Norfolk resident assured me. "This guy's a master of Hollywood accounting, and their share comes off the back end. My guess is the town gets fucked and they do, too."

The first objections arose in the autumn of 2001, after Slade met with three neighbors and outlined the basic plan. One of the three, Scott Asen, later tried to persuade Slade to give him time to come up with an alternative bidder. A studious-looking private investor who lives in New York and spends weekends in a house he grew up in and inherited from his parents, Asen hoped to induce a land trust or conservation organization to buy the farm. The price that Asen had in mind, however—four million dollars—Slade briskly dismissed. Eventually, Asen and the other neighbors constituted themselves as the Canaan Conservation Coalition and hired lawyers and technical experts to appear at public hearings and rebut the lawyers and experts hired by Betts and his partners. The group also retained a public-relations firm and posted yard signs around North Canaan (but not in Norfolk, where, by ordinance, that sort of thing is a no-no) with slogans like "Cows Not Caddies," "Berkshire Hills Not Beverly Hills," and "Gophers Not Golfers."

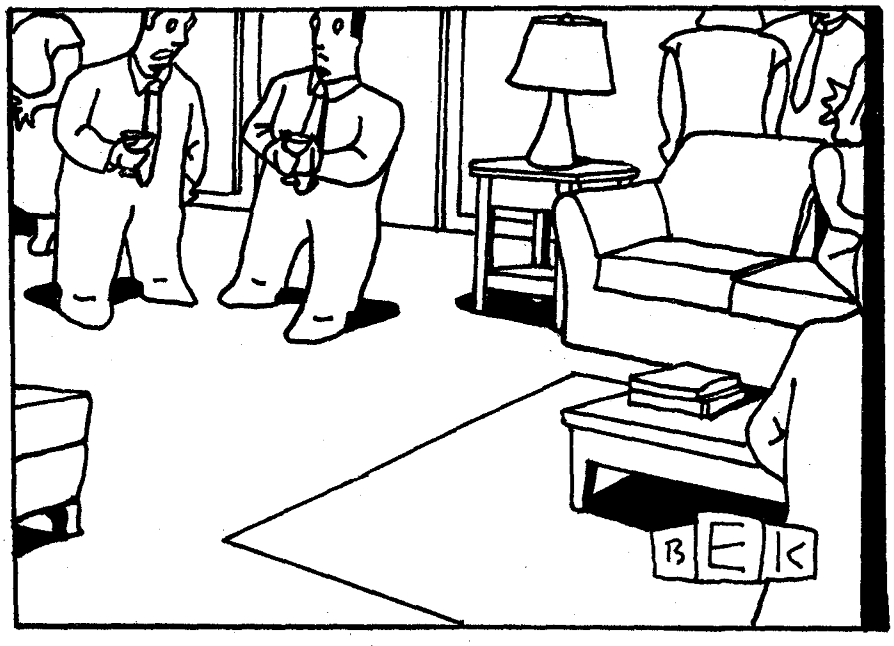
In Norfolk, a somewhat less combative entity, the Coalition for Sound Growth, materialized, qualifying as an intervener with Norfolk's inland-wetlands and planning-and-zoning commissions. For the past year, a Web site created by a coalition supporter has tracked the minutiae of the Yale Farm Golf Course battle. In addition to posting extended commentaries about land-use practices, the site has provided a forum for just barely polite jousting between Betts and his critics as well as less polite fulminations about his insidious designs. ("Do these super-rich nomads with their multiple residences remember what it's like to have only one home, or to be a member of a community?") Yet another protest group, which includes neighbors and former friends of Betts who believe that, after spending twenty-two years as an amicable enough weekend resident of North Canaan, he's now going to ruin the neighborhood, has occupied itself by writing letters to the editor impugning his judgment and character.

The opposition's overarching theme, after the ad-hominem gibes and the scientific verbiage have been pruned, is that the golf course represents the beginning of the end, the harbinger of a permanent violation of the environment for the benefit of nouveau-riche boors who long ago spoiled places like the Hamptons, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket—vulgarians who assume that anything, even a landscape, can be had for a price, and who congratulate themselves when, indeed, the price of everything in the vicinity, especially real estate, subsequently escalates. Thus, early on, after Betts promoted the golf course as a boon to property values during a presentation before the North Canaan board of selectmen, Wheaton Byers, one of the abutting landowners, told him, "But I don't *want* my property values to rise."

According to Byers, a retired diplomat whose family settled in North Canaan in 1938, "Betts told me, 'Your children will appreciate it.' I said, 'No they won't.' And he said, 'Then you'll just have to learn to live with it.' " (Betts denies that this conversation took place.)

Learning to live with it, the opponents maintain, would mean not only enduring an aesthetic insult (they anticipate scores of "McMansions" surrounding the golf course) but having to cope with extra traffic (from resident and nonresident golfers) and increased demands for municipal services (schools, fire and ambulance, roads). I also once overheard a couple of Coalition for Sound Growth members toying with the idea of having helicopters buzz over Norfolk to simulate President Bush and his Secret Service detail descending for a round of golf. Betts, who disputes the McMansion scenario, replies that Yale Farm Golf Club's homeowners would be predominately weekenders (or, even if they moved in year round, would send their children to private schools), and that the golf course and the new housing would yield multiple dividends: tax revenues would rise (giving existing property taxpayers relief); local businesses would benefit; jobs would be created.

An incontrovertible fact that neither Betts nor the Coalition for Sound Growth wants to dwell upon is that Norfolk already suffers from a dearth of so-called "affordable" housing. Whatever gets built at Yale Farm Golf Club would skew that statistic even further. The fear in Norfolk is that, at some point, the state will take note of this inequity, and (gasp!) a developer of low-cost multifamily housing or a downscale subdivision will get his foot in the door.



"I don't know if he's a great artist, but he's certainly annoying."

One irony of the contretemps—beyond Betts's characterization of it as "a titanic struggle between the haves and the haves"—is that a public-relations strategy that he plotted has become a public-relations bungle. Before Slade Mead encountered Betts, he discussed his plans with Arthur S. Rosenblatt, a close friend of his parents as well as, for six years, Norfolk's first selectman—de facto, the mayor. A jocular, sardonic man of Falstaffian girth, Rosenblatt grew up near Boston and settled in Norfolk in the early eighties (having first visited more than twenty years earlier with a friend whose family had been there for three generations). He quickly became an energetic volunteer, serving on various local boards before running for office in 1993. Among his accomplishments as first selectman was securing a large federal grant to help fund the felicitous renovation of the center of town. But he was consistently frustrated in his efforts to increase the commercial tax base—why was it that Norfolk couldn't even support a hardware store?—and that experience, he says, spurred his enthusiasm for the Mead-Betts vision for Yale Farm.

In the spring of 2002, at which point Rosenblatt was no longer first selectman but was still a member of the select board, he signed a contract as a public-relations consultant to the partnership—Betts having grasped that Rosenblatt, an avid gossip, could help him keep tabs on who in Norfolk opposed the project. Before proceeding, Rosenblatt had solicited an opinion from the town attorney, who concluded that he didn't have a conflict of interest, because the board played no substantive role in reviewing the golf-course proposal. However, as first selectman, Rosenblatt did have the authority to make appointments to the inland-wetlands commission; I spoke with a number of Norfolk citizens who said that they didn't oppose the golf course and yet felt that Rosenblatt had burdened himself—and, by association, Betts—with an appearance of impropriety. Nor did Rosenblatt help matters with his occasional barbed public comments. In one interview with the *Litchfield County Times*, he referred to the opposition campaign as "pathetic" and "lacking in wit," which prompted an editorial rebuke from the paper.

During a June meeting of the inland-wetlands commission, a lawyer for the Coalition for Sound Growth, in a sporting attempt to embarrass Rosenblatt, submitted a letter intending to disqualify him from speaking (though it was safe to assume he wouldn't be doing so anyway). I happened to be seated in front of Rosenblatt. Earlier, as the room filled—about eighty people attended—I had asked him whether he knew everyone present. "Not only do I know them," he replied. "I can tell you who's for and who's against."

Rosenblatt is the source of Betts's attempt to spin the opposition to Yale Farm Golf Club as, fundamentally, élitist sour grapes. When the coalition was forming, Rosenblatt discerned a significant overlap between its membership and that of the Norfolk Country Club, a deliberately unprepossessing establishment with six tennis courts, no swimming pool, and a spottily maintained nine-hole golf course. ("It's not well irrigated and the grasses are, shall we say, highly varied," a member told me.) In my first phone conversation with Betts, he said, "What I find interesting is that Norfolk already has a golf course attached to a very exclusive private club, and almost everyone opposed to us is associated with it." According to this logic, the hostility to Yale Farm Golf Club has nothing to do with its potential impact upon wetlands, water quality, myriad varieties of flora and fauna (including human), or the texture of life in a community rooted in a deeply conservative ethos of land stewardship. Nor does anyone in Norfolk sincerely object that the new folks in town wouldn't be likely candidates to volunteer for the school board, fire department, emergency medical squad, library, or historical society. Rather, it seems, it's all about vanity and wounded pride.

There are, to be sure, many unalarmed people in Norfolk—those who accept Betts's fiscal prognosis, or who believe that private-property rights are sacrosanct, or who view the conflict as an intraclass squabble that doesn't concern them. Within this last category, the opinion also prevails that, never mind what the regulations mandate, the project will be approved simply because its principal investor is a close friend of the President of the United States. Last month, both North Canaan commissions conditionally approved Betts's application, and the Canaan Conservation Coalition initiated an appeal. This fall, the Norfolk commissions are expected to deliver their verdicts, which either the proponents or the interveners are virtually certain to challenge. Meanwhile, Slade Mead is on record to the effect that if the golf course is ultimately turned down his Plan B is to build a high-density housing development.

When I went to see Betts in New York, a few days after the meeting of the Norfolk inland-wetlands commission, he surprised me by downplaying the importance of the housing component. "I've given serious thought to what if I eliminated the houses," he said. "If I did that, would it calm folks down? Or what if I take the fifty to sixty homes down to twenty? We'd just increase the size and the price of the lots. It's a wash."

We met in Betts's office at Chelsea Piers, two miles north of the World Trade Center site. In November, 2001, around the time Betts and the Meads were negotiating their partnership agreement, Betts was appointed to the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, and he subsequently supervised the architectural competition to redevelop Ground Zero. Among his other not-for-profit endeavors, he is a trustee of Columbia Law School and of Yale, and a member of the United States Olympic Committee. Both in his work and in his domestic life, he has peripatetic habits, and if he becomes persona non grata in the Berkshires he can always retreat to one of his other homes—in Manhattan, New Mexico, or Wyoming.

At one point, Betts began discussing traffic patterns. "There's this tremendous hubbub about how this golf course is going to completely change Norfolk," he said. "But I think Norfolk will be completely unaware of it. The whole orientation of the people using the golf course will be toward the west. That's how you get there from New York, or even from Boston—and Norfolk is to the south. Like in a stream, it's a back eddy. Physically and psychologically, Norfolk's the back door. It's isolated, it's not on the way to anywhere."

In the nineteenth century, the area west of the Canaan Valley was an iron-producing center, and Norfolk's forests supplied charcoal that fuelled the smelters. By the time the iron industry moved elsewhere, the timber harvest had denuded the landscape, at which point a small group of remarkably farsighted conservationists got busy, buying land for a song and committing themselves to its regeneration. Their descendants, Norfolk's fiercely protective inhabitants, don't consider it an accident that their town has the look and feel of not being on the way to anywhere in particular. They consider this an unalloyed virtue. The accident, in their minds, was the EgyptAir calamity, and the consequence is that they must now confront the likes of Roland Betts.

Betts has a disarming style of gamesmanship. It's often noted, in references to his bond with George Bush, that he's a Democrat, but more important, from Norfolk's perspective, is his comportment as a plutocrat. He's a large, affable man—he played hockey at Yale and kept it up until a shoulder injury slowed him down a while back—who presents himself as the soul of reasoned compromise. But he also exudes the air of someone whose experience has taught him that, by being persistent and thorough, he'll usually get his way. Even among his adversaries in Norfolk, the consensus goes, "Why does Roland Betts want to build this thing? Because he can." As for the deeper question of why, at one point while we were talking his assistant interrupted him: "I'm sorry—Mr. Betts, it's Condoleezza Rice calling." Betts slipped away for a few minutes. Upon returning, he said, "She wants a membership. What can I tell you?" ♦

FICTION

RUNAWAY

BY ALICE MUNRO

Carla heard the car coming before it topped the little rise in the road that around here they called a hill. It's her, she thought. Mrs. Jamieson—Sylvia—home from her holiday in Greece. From the barn door—but far enough inside that she could not easily be seen—she watched the road where Mrs. Jamieson would have to drive by, her place being half a mile farther along than Clark and Carla's.

If it was somebody coming to see them, the car would be slowing down by now. But still Carla hoped. *Let it not be her.*

It was. Mrs. Jamieson turned her head once, quickly—she had all she could do to maneuver her car through the ruts and puddles the rain had made in the gravel—but she didn't lift a hand off the wheel to wave, she didn't spot Carla. Carla got a glimpse of a tanned arm bare to the shoulder, hair bleached a lighter color than it had been before, more white now than silver-blond, and an expression that was both exasperated and amused at her own exasperation—just the way Mrs. Jamieson would look negotiating this road. When she turned her head there was something like a bright flash—of inquiry, of hopefulness—that made Carla shrink back.

So.

Maybe Clark didn't know yet. If he was sitting at the computer, he would have his back to the window and the road.

But he would have to know before long. Mrs. Jamieson might have to make another trip—for groceries, perhaps. He might see her then. And after dark the lights of her house would show. But this was July and it didn't get dark till late. She might be so tired that she wouldn't bother with the lights; she might go to bed early.

On the other hand, she might telephone. Anytime now.

This was the summer of rain and more rain. They heard it first thing in the morning, loud on the roof of the mobile home. The trails were deep in mud, the long grass soaking, leaves overhead sending down random showers even in those moments when there was no actual downpour from the sky. Carla wore a wide-brimmed old Australian felt hat every time she went outside, and tucked her long thick braid down her shirt.

WALTER SCHELS, "GOAT" (2000) / PHOTO ART, HAMBURG

Nobody showed up for trail rides—even though Clark and Carla had gone around posting signs at all the campsites, in the cafés, and on the tourist-office bulletin board, and anywhere else they could think of. Only a few pupils were coming for lessons, and those were regulars, not the batches of schoolchildren on vacation or the busloads from summer camps that had kept them going the summer before. And even the regulars took time off for holiday trips, or simply cancelled their lessons because of the weather. If they called too late, Clark charged them anyway. A couple of them had argued, and quit for good.

There was still some income from the three horses that were boarded. Those three, and the four of their own, were out in the field now, poking disconsolately in the grass under the trees. Carla had finished mucking out in the barn. She had taken her time—she liked the rhythm of her regular chores, the high space under the barn roof, the smells. Now she went over to the exercise ring to see how dry the ground was, in case the five-o'clock pupil did show up.

Most of the steady showers had not been particularly heavy, but last week there had come a sudden stirring and then a blast through the treetops and a nearly horizontal blinding rain. The storm had lasted only a quarter of an hour, but branches still lay across the road, hydro lines were down, and a large chunk of the plastic roofing over the ring had been torn loose. There was a puddle like a lake at that end of the track, and Clark had worked until after dark digging a channel to drain it away.

On the Web, right now, he was hunting for a place to buy roofing. Some salvage outlet, with prices that they could afford, or somebody trying to get rid of such material, secondhand. He would not go to Hy and Robert Buckley's Building Supply in town, which he called Highway Robbers Buggery Supply, because he owed them money and had had a fight with them.

Clark often had fights, and not just with the people he owed money to. His friendliness, compelling at first, could suddenly turn sour. There were places in town that he would not go into, because of some row. The drugstore was one such place. An old woman had pushed in front of him—that is, she had gone to get something she'd forgotten and come back and pushed in front, rather than going to the end of the line, and he had complained, and the cashier had said to him, "She has emphysema." Clark had said, "Is that so? I have piles myself," and the manager had been summoned to tell him that that remark was uncalled for. And in the coffee shop out on the highway the advertised breakfast discount had not been allowed, because it was past eleven o'clock in the morning, and Clark had argued and then dropped his takeout cup of coffee on the floor—just missing, so they said, a child in its stroller. He claimed that the child was half a mile away and he'd dropped the cup because no sleeve had been provided. They said that he hadn't asked for a sleeve. He said that he shouldn't have had to ask.

Et cetera.

"You flare up," Carla said.

"That's what men do."

She had not dared say anything about his row with Joy Tucker, whom he now referred to as Joy-Fucker. Joy was the librarian from town who boarded her horse with them, a quick-tempered little chestnut mare named Lizzie. Joy Tucker, when she was in a jokey mood, called her Lizzie Borden. Yesterday, she had driven out, not in a jokey mood at all, and complained about the roof's not being fixed and Lizzie looking so miserable, as if she might have caught a chill. There was nothing the matter with Lizzie, actually. Clark had even tried—for him—to be placating. But then it was Joy Tucker who flared up and said that their place was a dump, and Lizzie deserved better, and Clark said, "Suit yourself." Joy had not—or not yet—removed Lizzie, but Clark, who had formerly made the mare his pet, refused to have anything more to do with her.

The worst thing, as far as Carla was concerned, was the absence of Flora, the little white goat who kept the horses company in the barn and in the fields. There had been no sign of her for two days, and Carla was afraid that wild dogs or coyotes had got her, or even a bear.

She had dreamed of Flora last night and the night before. In the first dream, Flora had walked right up to the bed with a red apple in her mouth, but in the second dream—last night—she had run away when she saw Carla coming. Her leg seemed to be hurt, but she ran anyway. She led Carla to a barbed-wire barricade of the kind that might belong on some battlefield, and then she—Flora—slipped through it, hurt leg and all, just slithered through like a white eel and disappeared.

Up until three years ago, Carla had never really looked at mobile homes. She hadn't called them that, either. Like her parents, she would have thought the term "mobile home" pretentious. Some people lived in trailers, and that was all there was to it. One trailer was no different from another. When she moved in here, when she chose this life with Clark, she began to see things in a new way. After that, it was only the mobile homes that she really looked at, to see how people had fixed them up—the kind of curtains they had hung, the way they had painted the trim, the ambitious decks or patios or extra rooms they had built on. She could hardly wait to get to such improvements herself.

Clark had gone along with her ideas for a while. He had built new steps, and spent a lot of time looking for an old wrought-iron railing for them. He hadn't complained about the money spent on paint for the kitchen and bathroom or the material for curtains.

What he did balk at was tearing up the carpet, which was the same in every room and the thing that she had most counted on replacing. It was divided into small brown squares, each with a pattern of darker brown, rust, and tan squiggles and shapes. For a long time, she had thought that the same squiggles and shapes were arranged the same way in each square. Then, when she had had more time, a lot of time, to examine them, she decided that there were four patterns joined together to make identical larger squares. Sometimes she could pick out the arrangement easily and sometimes she had to work to see it.

She did this at times when Clark's mood had weighted down all their indoor space. The best thing then was to invent or remember some job to do in the barn. The horses would not look at her when she was unhappy, but Flora, who was never tied up, would come and rub against her, and look up with an expression that was not quite sympathy; it was more like comradely mockery in her shimmering yellow-green eyes.

Flora had been a half-grown kid when Clark brought her home from a farm where he'd gone to bargain for some horse tackle. He had heard that a goat was able to put horses at ease and he wanted to try it. At first she had been Clark's pet entirely, following him everywhere, dancing for his attention. She was as quick and graceful and provocative as a kitten, and her resemblance to a guileless girl in love had made them both laugh. But as she grew older she seemed to attach herself to Carla, and in this attachment she was suddenly much wiser, less skittish—she seemed capable, instead, of a subdued and ironic sort of humor. Carla's behavior with the horses was tender and strict and rather maternal, but the comradeship with Flora was quite different. Flora allowed her no sense of superiority.

"Still no sign of Flora?" she said as she pulled off her barn boots. Clark had posted a "lost goat" notice on the Web.

"Not so far," he said, in a preoccupied but not unfriendly voice. He suggested, not for the first time, that Flora might have just gone off to find herself a billy.

No word about Mrs. Jamieson.

Carla put the kettle on. Clark was humming to himself as he often did when he sat in front of the computer. Sometimes he talked back to it. "Bullshit," he might say, replying to some challenge. He laughed occasionally, but rarely remembered what the joke was when she asked him afterward.

Carla called, "Do you want tea?" And to her surprise he got up and came into the kitchen.

"So," he said. "So, Carla."

"What?"

"So she phoned."

"Who?"

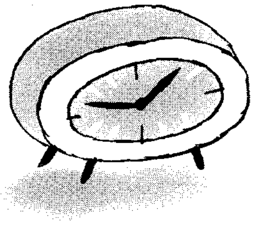
"Her majesty. Queen Sylvia. She just got back."

"I didn't hear the car."

"I didn't ask you if you did."

"So what did she phone for?"

"She wants you to go and help her straighten up the house. That's what she said. Tomorrow."



"What did you tell her?"

"I told her sure. But you'd better phone up and confirm."

Carla said, "Why do I have to, if you told her?" She poured their mugs of tea. "I cleaned up her house before she left. I don't see what there could be to do so soon."

"Maybe some coons got in and made a mess of it while she was gone. You never know."

"I don't have to phone her right this minute. I want to drink my tea and I want to take a shower."

"The sooner the better."

Carla took her tea into the bathroom.

"We have to go to the laundromat. When the towels dry out, they still smell moldy."

"We're not changing the subject, Carla."

Even after she'd got in the shower, he stood outside the door and called to her.

"I am not going to let you off the hook, Carla."

She thought he might still be standing there when she came out, but he was back at the computer. She dressed as if she were going to town—she hoped that if they could get out of there, go to the laundromat, get a takeout at the cappuccino place, they might be able to talk in a different way, some release might be possible. She went into the living room with a brisk step and put her arms around him from behind. But as soon as she did that a wave of grief swallowed her up—it must have been the heat of the shower, loosening her tears—and she bent over him, crumbling and crying.

He took his hands off the keyboard but sat still.

"Just don't be mad at me," she said.

"I'm not mad. I hate when you're like this, that's all."

"I'm like this because you're mad."

"Don't tell me what I am. You're choking me. Go and get control of yourself. Start supper."

That was what she did. It was obvious by now that the five-o'clock person wasn't coming. She got out the potatoes and started to peel them, but her tears would not stop. She wiped her face with a paper towel and tore off a fresh one to take with her and went out into the rain. She didn't go into the barn because it was too miserable in there without Flora. She walked along the lane back to the woods. The horses were in the other field. They came over to the fence to watch her, but all except Lizzie, who capered and snorted a bit, had the sense to understand that her attention was elsewhere.

It had started when they read the obituary, Mr. Jamieson's obituary, in the city paper. Until the year before, they had known the Jamiesons only as neighbors who kept to themselves. She taught botany at the college forty miles away, so she had to spend a good deal of her time on the road. He was a poet. But for a poet, and for an old man—perhaps twenty years older than Mrs. Jamieson—he was rugged and active. He improved the drainage system on his place, cleaning out the culvert and lining it with rocks. He dug and planted and fenced a vegetable garden, cut paths through the woods, looked after repairs on the house—not just the sort of repairs that almost any house owner could manage after a while but those that involved plumbing, wiring, roofing, too.

When they read the obituary, Carla and Clark learned for the first time that Leon Jamieson had been the recipient of a large prize five years before his death. A prize for poetry.

Shortly afterward, Clark said, "We could've made him pay."

Carla knew at once what he was talking about, but she took it as a joke.

"Too late now," she said. "You can't pay once you're dead."

"He can't. She could."

"She's gone to Greece."

"She's not going to stay in Greece."

"She didn't know," Carla said more soberly. "She didn't have anything to do with it."

"I didn't say she did."

"She doesn't have a clue about it."

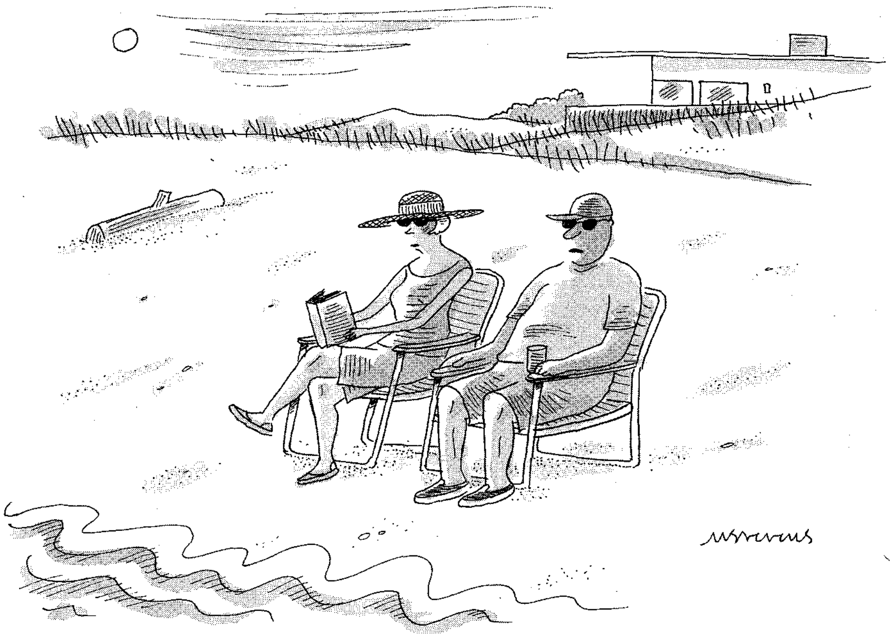
"We could fix that."

Carla said, "No. No."

Clark went on as if she hadn't spoken.

"We could say we're going to sue. People get money for stuff like that all the time."

"How could you do that? You can't sue a dead person."



"I can't stop thinking about all those available parking spaces back on West Eighty-fifth Street."

"Threaten to go to the papers. Big-time poet. The papers would eat it up. All we have to do is threaten and she'd cave in. How much are we going to ask for?"

"You're just fantasizing," Carla said. "You're joking."

"No. Actually, I'm not."

Carla said that she didn't want to talk about it anymore, and he said O.K. But they talked about it the next day, and the next, and the next. He sometimes got notions like this, which were not practicable, which might even be illegal. He talked about them with growing excitement and then—she wasn't sure why—he dropped them. If the rain had stopped, if this had turned into a normal summer, he might have let this idea go the way of the others. But that had not happened, and during the last month he had harped on about the scheme as if it were perfectly feasible. The question was how much money to ask for. Too little and the woman might not take them seriously; she might think they were bluffing. Too much might get her back up and she might become stubborn.

Carla had stopped pretending she thought he was joking. Instead, she told him that it wouldn't work. She said that, for one thing, people expected poets to behave that way. So it wouldn't be worth paying out money to cover it up.

"How do you know?" Clark said.

He said that it would work if it was done right. Carla was to break down and tell Mrs. Jamieson the whole story. Then Clark would move in, as if it had all been a surprise to him, he had just found out. He would be outraged; he would talk about telling the world. He would let Mrs. Jamieson be the one who first mentioned money.

"You were injured. You were molested and humiliated and I was injured and humiliated because you are my wife. It's a question of respect."

Over and over again he talked to her in this way. She tried to deflect him, but he insisted.

"Promise," he said. "Promise."

All this was because of what she had told him—things she could not now retract or deny.

Sometimes he gets interested in me?

The old guy?

Sometimes he calls me into the room when she's not there?

When she has to go out shopping and the nurse isn't there, either?

A lucky inspiration of hers, one that instantly pleased him.

So what do you do then? Do you go in?

She played shy.

Sometimes.

He calls you into his room. So? Carla? So, then?

I go in to see what he wants.

So what does he want?

This was asked and told in whispers, even when there was nobody to hear, even when they were in the never-land of their bed. A bedtime story, in which the details were important and had to be added to each time, with convincing reluctance, shyness, giggles. (*Dirty, dirty.*) And it was not only he who was eager and grateful. She was, too. Eager to please and excite him, to excite herself. Grateful every time that it still worked.

And in one part of her mind it *was* true: she saw the randy old man, the bump he made in the sheet, bedridden, almost beyond speech but proficient in sign language, indicating his desire, trying to nudge and finger her into complicity, into obliging stunts and intimacies. (Her refusal a necessity, but also, perhaps, strangely, slightly disappointing to Clark.)

Now and then came an image that she had to hammer down lest it spoil everything. She would think of the real dim and sheeted body, drugged and shrinking every day in its hospital bed, glimpsed only a few times, when Mrs. Jamieson or the visiting nurse had neglected to close the door. She herself never actually coming closer to him than that.

In fact, she had dreaded going to the Jamiesons', but she needed the money, and she felt sorry for Mrs. Jamieson, who seemed so haunted and bewildered, as if she were walking in her sleep. Once or twice, Carla had burst out and done something really silly just to loosen up the atmosphere. The kind of thing she did when clumsy and terrified riders were feeling humiliated. She used to try it, too, when Clark was stuck in his moods. It didn't work with him anymore. But the story about Mr. Jamieson had worked, decisively.

"I'll handle this."

At the house there was nothing for Sylvia to do except open the windows. And think—with an eagerness that dismayed without really surprising her—of how soon she could see Carla.

All the paraphernalia of illness had been removed. The room that had been Sylvia and her husband's bedroom and then his death chamber had been cleaned out and tidied up to look as if nothing had ever happened in it. Carla had helped with all that, during the few frenzied days between the crematorium and the departure for Greece. Every piece of clothing Leon had ever worn and some things he hadn't, some gifts from his sisters that had never been taken out of their packages, had been piled in the back seat of the car and taken to the thrift shop. His pills, his shaving things, unopened cans of the fortified drink that had sustained him as long as anything could, cartons of the sesame-seed snaps that had at one time been his favorite snack, the plastic bottles full of the lotion that had eased his back, the sheepskins on which he had lain—all of that was dumped into plastic bags to be hauled away as garbage, and Carla didn't question a thing. She never said, "Maybe somebody could use that," or pointed out that whole cartons of cans were unopened. When Sylvia said, "I wish I hadn't taken the clothes to town. I wish I'd burned them all up in the incinerator," Carla showed no surprise.

They cleaned the oven, scrubbed out the cupboards, wiped down the walls and the windows. One day Sylvia sat in the living room going through all the condolence letters she had received. (There was no accumulation of papers and notebooks to be attended to, as you might have expected with a writer, no unfinished work or scribbled drafts. He had told her, months before, that he had pitched everything. *And no regrets.*) The sloping south wall of the house was mostly big windows. Sylvia looked up, surprised by the watery sunlight that had come out—or possibly by the shadow of Carla on top of a ladder, bare-legged, bare-armed, her resolute face crowned with a frizz of dandelion hair that was too short for her braid. She was vigorously spraying and scrubbing the glass. When she saw Sylvia looking at her, she stopped and flung out her arms as if she were splayed there, making a preposterous gargoyle-like face. They both began to laugh. Sylvia felt this laughter running through her like a sweet stream. She turned back to her letters and soon decided that all these kind, genuine, or perfunctory words, the tributes and the regrets, could go the way of the sheepskins and the crackers.

When she heard Carla taking the ladder down, heard boots on the deck, she was suddenly shy. She sat where she was with her head bowed as Carla came into the room and passed behind her, on her way to the kitchen to put the pail and the paper towels back under the sink. She hardly halted—she was quick as a bird—but she managed to drop a kiss on Sylvia's bent head. Then she went on. She was whistling something to herself, perhaps had been whistling the whole time.

That kiss had been in Sylvia's mind ever since. It meant nothing in particular. It meant *Cheer up*. Or *Almost done*. It meant that they were good friends who had got through a lot of depressing work together. Or maybe just that the sun had come out. That Carla was thinking of getting home to her horses. Nevertheless, Sylvia saw it as a bright blossom, its petals spreading inside her with a tumultuous heat, like a menopausal flash.

Every so often there had been a special girl student in one of her classes—one whose cleverness and dedication and awkward egotism, or even genuine passion for the natural world, reminded her of her young self. Such girls hung around her worshipfully, hoped for some sort of intimacy they could not—in most cases—imagine, and soon got on her nerves.

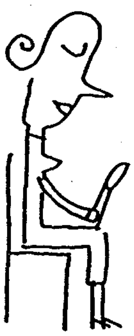
Carla was nothing like them. If she resembled anybody in Sylvia's life, it would have to be certain girls she had known in high school—those who were bright but not too bright, easy athletes but not competitive, buoyant but not rambunctious. Naturally happy.

The day after Sylvia's return, she was speaking to Carla about Greece.

"Where I was, this little tiny village with my two old friends, well, it was the sort of place where the very occasional tourist bus would stop, as if it had got lost, and the tourists would get off and look around and they were absolutely bewildered because they weren't anywhere. There was nothing to buy."

The large-limbed, uncomfortable, dazzling girl was sitting there at last, in the room that had been filled with thoughts of her. She was faintly smiling, belatedly nodding.

"And at first I was bewildered, too. It was so hot. But it's true about the light. It's wonderful. And then I figured out what there was to do. There were just these few simple things, but they could fill the day. You walk half a mile down the road to buy some oil, and half a mile in the other direction to buy your bread or your wine, and that's the morning. Then you eat some lunch under the trees, and after lunch it's too hot to do anything but close the shutters and lie on your bed and maybe read. Later on, you notice that the shadows are longer and you get up and go for a swim. Oh," she interrupted herself. "Oh, I forgot."



She jumped up and went to get the present she had brought, which in fact she had not forgotten about at all. She had not wanted to hand it to Carla right away—she had wanted the moment to come more naturally, and while she was speaking she had thought ahead to the moment when she could mention the sea, going swimming. And then say, as she now said, "Swimming reminded me of this because it's a little replica, you know, it's a little replica of the horse they found under the sea. Cast in bronze. They dredged it up, after all this time. It's supposed to be from the second century B.C."

When Carla had come in and looked around for work to do, Sylvia had said, "Oh, just sit down a minute. I haven't had anybody to talk to since I got back. Please." Carla had sat down on the edge of a chair, legs apart, hands between her knees, looking somehow desolate. As if reaching for some distant politeness, she had said, "How was Greece?"

Now she was standing, with the tissue paper crumpled around the horse, which she had not fully unwrapped.

"It's said to represent a racehorse," Sylvia said. "Making that final spurt, the last effort in a race. The rider, too—the boy—you can see that he's urging the horse on to the limit of its strength."

She did not mention that the boy had made her think of Carla, and she could not now have said why. He was only ten or eleven years old. Maybe the strength and grace of the arm that must have held the reins, or the wrinkles in his childish forehead, the absorption and the pure effort there. It was, in some way, like Carla cleaning the windows last spring. Her strong legs in her shorts, her broad shoulders, her big dedicated swipes at the glass, and then the way she had splayed herself out as a joke, inviting or even commanding Sylvia to laugh.

"You can see that," Carla said, conscientiously now examining the little bronzy-green statue. "Thank you very much."

"You are welcome. Let's have coffee, shall we? I've just made some. The coffee in Greece was strong, a little stronger than I liked, but the bread was heavenly. Sit down another moment, please do. You should stop me going on and on this way. What about here? How has life been here?"

"It's been raining most of the time."

"I can see that. I can see it has," Sylvia called from the kitchen end of the big room. Pouring the coffee, she decided that she would keep quiet about the other gift she had brought. It hadn't cost her anything (the horse had cost more than the girl could probably guess); it was only a beautiful small pinkish-white stone that she had picked up on the road.

"This is for Carla," she had said to her friend Maggie, who was walking beside her. "I know it's silly. I just want her to have a tiny piece of this land."

Sylvia had already mentioned Carla to Maggie, and to Soraya, her other friend there—telling them how the girl's presence had come to mean more and more to her, how an indescribable bond had seemed to grow up between them, and had consoled her in the awful months of last spring.

"It was just to see somebody—somebody so fresh and full of health coming into the house."

Maggie and Soraya had laughed in a kindly but annoying way.

"There's always a girl," Soraya said, with an indolent stretch of her heavy brown arms, and Maggie said, "We all come to it sometime. A crush on a girl."

Sylvia was obscurely angered by that dated word—"crush."

"Maybe it's because Leon and I never

had children," she said. "It's stupid. Displaced maternal love."

But the girl was not, today, anything like the Carla that Sylvia had been remembering, not at all the calm, bright spirit, the carefree and generous creature who had kept her company in Greece.

She had been almost sullen about her gift. Almost sullen as she reached out for her mug of coffee.

"There was one thing I thought you would have liked a lot," Sylvia said energetically. "The goats. They were quite small even when they were full grown. Some spotty and some white, and they were leaping around on the rocks just like—really like the spirits of the place." She laughed, in an artificial way; she couldn't stop herself. "I wouldn't be surprised if they'd had wreaths on their horns. How is your little goat? I forget her name."

Carla said, "Flora."

"Flora."

"She's gone."

"Gone? Did you sell her?"

"She disappeared. We don't know where."

"Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. But isn't there a chance she'll turn up again?"

No answer. Sylvia looked directly at the girl—something that up to now she had not quite been able to do. She saw that her eyes were full of tears, her face blotchy—in fact, it seemed grubby—and that she was bloated with distress.

Carla didn't do anything to avoid Sylvia's look. She drew her lips tight over her teeth and shut her eyes and rocked back and forth as if in a soundless howl and then, shockingly, she did howl. She howled and wept and gulped for air, and tears ran down her cheeks and snot out of her nostrils, and she began to look around wildly for something to wipe with. Sylvia ran and got handfuls of Kleenex.

"Don't worry, here you are, here, you're all right," she said, thinking that maybe she should take the girl in her arms. But she had not the least wish to do that, and it might make things worse. The girl might feel how little Sylvia wanted to do that, how appalled she was, in fact, by this fit.

Carla said something, said the same thing again.

"Awful," she said. "Awful."

"No, it's not. We all have to cry sometimes. It's all right, don't worry."

"It's awful."

And Sylvia could not help feeling that, with every moment of this show of misery, the girl made herself more ordinary, more like one of those soggy students in her—Sylvia's—office. Some of them cried about their marks—but that was often tactical, a brief, unconvincing bit of whimpering. The less frequent, real waterworks always turned out to have something to do with a love affair, or their parents, or a pregnancy.

"It's not about your goat, is it?"

No. No.

"Then what is it?"

Carla said, "I can't stand it anymore."

What could she not stand?

It turned out to be the husband.

He was mad at her all the time. He acted as if he hated her. There was nothing she could do right; there was nothing she could say. Living with him was driving her crazy. Sometimes she thought she already was crazy.

"Has he hurt you, Carla?"

No. He hadn't hurt her physically. But he hated her. He despised her. He could not stand it when she cried and she could not help crying because he was so mad. She did not know what to do.

"Perhaps you do know what to do," Sylvia said.

"Get away? I would if I could," Carla began to wail again. "I'd give anything to get away. I can't. I haven't any money. I haven't anywhere in this world to go."

"Well. Think. Is that altogether true?" Sylvia said in her best counselling manner. "Don't you have parents? Didn't you tell me you grew up in Kingston? Don't you have a family there?"

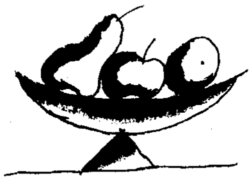
Her parents had moved to British Columbia. They hated Clark. When she ran away and got married, they didn't care if she lived or died.

Brothers or sisters?

One brother, nine years older. He was married and in Toronto. He didn't care, either. He didn't like Clark. His wife was a sickening snob.

"Have you ever thought of the women's shelter?"

"They don't want you there unless you've been beaten up. And everybody would find out and it would be bad for our business."



Sylvia smiled gently. "Is this a time to think about that?"

Then Carla actually laughed. "I know," she said. "I'm insane."

"Listen," Sylvia said. "Listen to me. If you had the money to go, where would you go? What would you do?"

"I would go to Toronto," Carla said, readily enough. "But I wouldn't go near my brother. I'd stay in a motel or something and I'd get a job at a riding stable."

"You think you could do that?"

"I was working at a riding stable the summer I met Clark. I'm more experienced now than I was then. A lot more."

"And all that's stopping you is lack of money?"

Carla took a deep breath. "All that's stopping me," she said.

"All right," Sylvia said. "Now, listen to what I propose. I don't think you should go to a motel. I think you should take the bus to Toronto and go to stay with a friend of mine. Her name is Ruth Stiles. She has a big house and she lives alone and she won't mind having somebody to stay. You can stay there till you find a job. I'll help you with some money. There must be lots of riding stables around Toronto."

"There are."

"So what do you think? Do you want me to phone and find out what time the bus goes?"

Carla said yes. She was shivering. She ran her hands up and down her thighs and shook her head roughly from side to side.

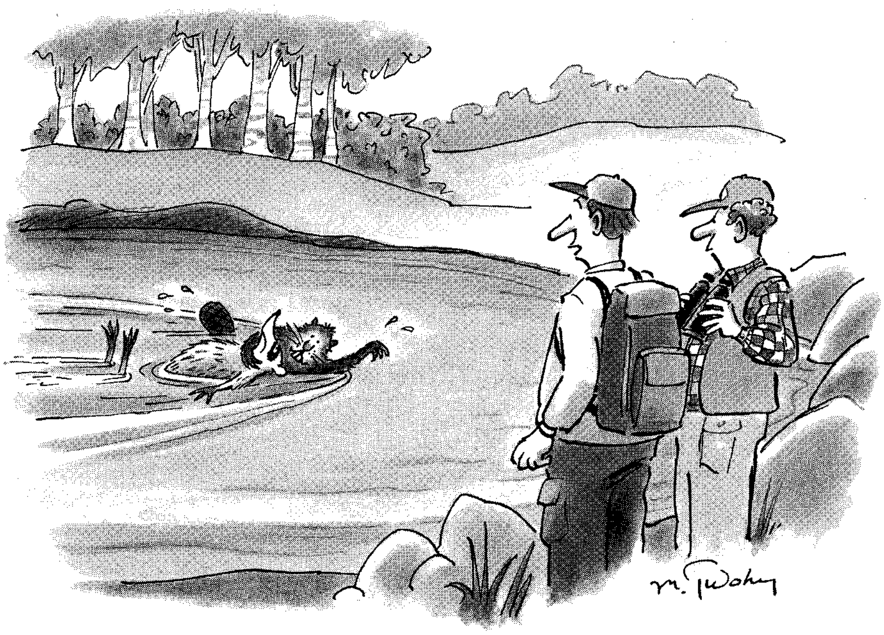
"I can't believe it," she said. "I'll pay you back. I mean, thank you. I'll pay you back. I don't know what to say."

Sylvia was already at the phone, dialling the bus depot.

"Sh-h-h, I'm getting the times," she said. She listened and hung up. "I know you will. You agree about Ruth's? I'll let her know. There's one problem, though." She looked critically at Carla's shorts and T-shirt. "You can't very well go in those clothes."

"I can't go home to get anything," Carla said in a panic. "I'll be all right."

"The bus will be air-conditioned. You'll freeze. There must be something



"Nature can be cruel, but occasionally there are instances of great compassion."

of mine you could wear. Aren't we about the same height?"

"You're ten times skinnier," Carla said. "I didn't use to be."

In the end, they decided on a brown linen jacket, hardly worn—Sylvia had considered it to be a mistake for herself, the style too brusque—and a pair of tailored tan pants and a cream-colored silk shirt. Carla's sneakers would have to do, because her feet were two sizes larger then Sylvia's.

Carla went to take a shower—something she had not bothered with, in her state of mind that morning—and Sylvia phoned Ruth. Ruth was going to be out at a meeting that evening, but she would leave the key with her upstairs tenants and all Carla would have to do was ring their bell.

"She'll have to take a cab from the bus depot, though. I assume she's O.K. to manage that?" Ruth said.

Sylvia laughed. "She's not a lame duck, don't worry. She is just a person in a bad situation, the way it happens."

"Well, good. I mean, good she's getting out."

"Not a lame duck at all," Sylvia said, thinking of Carla trying on the tailored pants and linen jacket. How quickly the young recover from a fit of despair and how handsome the girl had looked in the fresh clothes.

The bus would stop in town at twenty past two. Sylvia decided to make omelettes for lunch, to set the table with the dark-blue cloth, and to get down the crystal glasses and open a bottle of wine.

"I hope you can eat something," she said, when Carla came out clean and shining in her borrowed clothes. Her softly freckled skin was flushed from the shower and her hair was damp and darkened, out of its braid, the sweet frizz now flat against her head. She said that she was hungry, but when she tried to get a forkful of the omelette to her mouth her trembling hands made it impossible.

"I don't know why I'm shaking like this," she said. "I must be excited. I never knew it would be this easy."

"It's very sudden," Sylvia said judiciously. "Probably it doesn't seem quite real."

"It does, though. Everything now seems really real. It's like the time before—that's when I was in a daze."

"Maybe when you make up your mind to something, when you really make up your mind, that's how it is. Or that's how it should be. Easy."

"If you've got a friend," Carla said with a self-conscious smile and a flush spreading over her forehead. "If you've got a true friend. I mean, like you." She laid down the knife and fork and raised her wineglass with both hands. "Drinking to a true friend," she said, uncomfortably. "I probably shouldn't even take a sip, but I will."

"Me, too," Sylvia said with a pretense of gaiety, but she spoiled the moment by saying, "Are you going to phone him? Or what? He'll have to know. At least he'll have to know where you are by the time he'd be expecting you home."

"Not the phone," Carla said, alarmed. "I can't do it. Maybe if you—"

"No," Sylvia said. "No."

"No, that's stupid of me. I shouldn't have said that. It's just hard to think straight. What I maybe should do is put a note in the mailbox. But I don't want him to get it too soon. I don't want us to even drive past there when we're going into town. I want to go the back way. So if I write it—if I write it, could you, could you maybe slip it in the box when you come back?"

Sylvia agreed to this, seeing no good alternative. She brought pen and paper and poured a little more wine. Carla sat thinking, then wrote a few words.

I *have gone away. I will be all write.*

These were the words that Sylvia read when she unfolded the paper on her way back from the bus station. She was sure that Carla knew "right" from "write." It was just that she had been talking about *writing* a note and she was in a state of exalted confusion. More confusion perhaps than Sylvia had realized. The wine had brought out a stream of talk, but it had not seemed to be accompanied by any particular grief or upset. She had talked about the horse barn where she had worked when she was eighteen and just out of high school—that was where she'd met Clark. Her parents had wanted her to go to college, and she had agreed, as long as she could choose to be a veterinarian. She had been one of those dorky girls in high school, one of those girls they made rotten jokes about, but she didn't care. All she really wanted, and had wanted all her life, was to work with animals and live in the country.

Clark was the best riding teacher they had—and good-looking, too. Scads of women were after him—they would take up riding just to get him as their

LAWYERS ON THE LEFT BANK

So this is me at thirty-two, the strange dream seemed to say:
the lawyers order coffee in a louche Left Bank café
and read their menus carefully, and sit extremely still
while all around them lips kiss, fistfights rage, and glasses spill.
What they are doing in this rowdy tavern is not clear.
It's obvious they are not prudes, for after all, they're *here*.
But in this topsy-turvy room where tables serve as beds
and tarts are jumping out of cakes, what thoughts race through their heads?
Perhaps they harbor fantasies of trading in their suits
for clingy leather bodices and sleek stiletto boots;
perhaps they scan the revelry and contemplate a fate
where working hard is not the solemn foe of playing late;
or maybe they just tease the air with legions of small sighs
and burn holes in the carpet with averted bedroom eyes.

—*Rachel Wetzsteon*

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teacher. She had teased him about this, and at first he seemed to like it, but then he got annoyed. She tried to make up for it by getting him talking about his dream—his plan, really—to have a riding school, a horse stable, someplace out in the country. One day, she came in to work and saw him hanging up his saddle and realized that she had fallen in love with him.

Maybe it was just sex. It was probably just sex.

When fall came and she was supposed to leave for college, she refused to go. She said she needed a year off.

Clark was very smart, but he hadn't waited even to finish high school, and he had altogether lost touch with his family. He thought families were like a poison in your blood. He had been an attendant in a mental hospital, a disk jockey on a radio station in Lethbridge, Alberta, a member of a road crew near Thunder Bay, an apprentice barber, a salesman in an Army-surplus store. And those were only the jobs he had told her about.

She had nicknamed him Gypsy Rover, because of the song, an old song her mother used to sing. And she took to singing it around the house all the time, till her mother knew something was up.

Last night she slept on a goose-feather bed
With silken sheets for cover.
Tonight she'll sleep on the cold cold ground—
Beside her gypsy lo-ov-ver.

Her mother had said, "He'll break your heart, that's a sure thing." Her stepfather, who was an engineer, did not even grant Clark that much power. "A loser," he called him. "A drifter." He said this as if Clark were a bug he could just whisk off his clothes.

Carla said, "Does a drifter save up enough money to buy a farm, which, by the way, he has done?" He said, "I'm not about to argue with you." She was not his daughter, anyway, he added, as if that were the clincher.

So, naturally, Carla had had to run away with him. The way her parents behaved, they were practically guaranteeing it.

"Will you get in touch with your parents after you're settled?" Sylvia asked. "In Toronto?"

Carla raised her eyebrows, pulled in her cheeks, and made a saucy O of her mouth. She said, "Nope."

Definitely a little bit drunk.

Back home, having left the note in the mailbox, Sylvia cleaned up the dishes that were still on the table, washed and polished the omelette pan, threw the blue napkins and tablecloth in the laundry basket, and opened the windows. She did this with a confusing sense of regret and irritation. She had put out a fresh cake of apple-scented soap for the girl's shower and the smell of it lingered in the house, as it had in the air of the car.

Sometime in the last hour or so the rain had stopped. She could not stay still, so she went for a walk along the path that Leon had cleared. The gravel he had dumped in the boggy places had mostly washed away. They used to go walking every spring to hunt for wild orchids. She taught him the name of every wildflower—all of which, except for trillium, he forgot. He called her his Dorothy Wordsworth.

Last spring, she had gone out once, and picked him a bunch of dogtooth violets, but he had looked at them—as he sometimes looked at her—with mere exhaustion, disavowal.

She kept seeing Carla, Carla stepping onto the bus. Her thanks had been sincere but already almost casual, her wave jaunty. She had got used to her salvation.

Around six o'clock, Sylvia put in a call to Toronto, to Ruth, knowing that Carla probably wouldn't have arrived yet. She got the answering machine.

"Ruth," Sylvia said. "Sylvia. It's about this girl I sent you. I hope she doesn't turn out to be a bother to you. I hope it'll be all right. You may find her a little full of herself. Maybe it's just youth. Let me know. O.K.? O.K. Bye-bye."

She phoned again before she went to bed but got the machine, so she said, "Sylvia again. Just checking," and hung up. It was between nine and ten o'clock, not even really dark. Ruth would still be out, and the girl would not want to pick up the phone in a strange house. She tried to think of the name of Ruth's upstairs tenants. They surely wouldn't have gone to bed yet. But she could not remember it. And just as well. Phoning them would have been going too far.

She got into bed, but it was impossible, so she took a light quilt and went out to the living room and lay down on the sofa, where she had slept for the last three months of Leon's life. She did not think it likely that she would get to sleep there, either—there were no curtains on the huge south windows and she could tell by the sky that the moon had risen, though she could not see it.

The next thing she knew she was on a bus somewhere—in Greece?—with a lot of people she did not know, and the engine of the bus was making an alarm-ing knocking sound. She woke to find that the knocking was at her front door.

Carla?

Carla had kept her head down until the bus was clear of town. The windows were tinted, nobody could see in, but she had to guard herself against seeing out. Lest Clark appear. Coming out of a store or waiting to cross the street, ignorant of her abandonment, thinking this an ordinary afternoon. No: thinking it the afternoon when their scheme—his scheme—had been put in motion, eager to know how far she had got with it.

Once they were out in the country, she looked up, breathed deeply, took account of the violet-tinted fields. Mrs. Jamieson's presence had surrounded her with a kind of remarkable safety and sanity, had made her escape seem the most rational thing you could imagine—in fact, the only self-respecting thing that a person in Carla's shoes could do. Carla had felt herself capable of an unaccustomed confidence, even a mature sense of humor. She had revealed her life to Mrs. Jamieson in a way that seemed bound to gain sympathy and yet to be ironic and truthful. And adapted to live up to what, as far as she could see, were Mrs. Jamieson's—Sylvia's—expectations.

The sun was shining, as it had been for some time. At lunch, it had made the wineglasses sparkle. And there was enough of a wind blowing to lift the roadside grass, the flowering weeds, out of their drenched clumps. Summer clouds, not rain clouds, were scudding across the sky. The whole countryside was changing, shaking itself loose, into the true brightness of a July day. And as they sped along she didn't see much trace of the recent past—no big puddles in the fields, showing where the seed had washed out, no miserable spindly cornstalks or lodged grain.

It occurred to her that she should tell Clark about this—that perhaps they had chosen what was, for some freakish reason, a very wet and dreary corner of the country, and there were other places where they could have been successful.

Or could be yet?

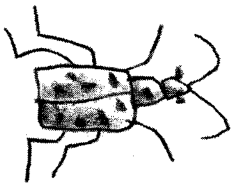
Then it came to her, of course, that she would not be telling Clark anything. Never again. She would not be concerned about what happened to him, or to the horses. If, by any chance, Flora came back she would not hear about it.

This was her second time, leaving everything behind. The first time had been just like the old Beatles song: she had put a note on the table and slipped out of the house at five o'clock in the morning to meet Clark in the church parking lot down the street. She was even humming that song as they rattled away. *She's leaving home, bye-bye.* She recalled now how the sun had come up behind them, how she had looked at Clark's hands on the wheel, at the dark hairs on his competent forearms, and breathed in the smell of the truck, a smell of oil and metal tools and horse barns. The cold air of the fall morning had blown in through the rusted seams of the sort of vehicle that nobody in her family ever rode in, that scarcely ever appeared on the streets where she lived. Clark's preoccupation with the traffic, his curt answers, his narrowed eyes, everything about him that ignored her, even his slight irritation at her giddy delight—all of that had thrilled her. As did the disorder of his past life, his avowed loneliness, the unexpectedly tender way he could have with a horse, and with her. She saw him as the sturdy architect of the life ahead of them, herself as a captive, her submission both proper and exquisite.

"You don't know what you're leaving behind," her mother wrote to her, in the one letter she received and never answered. But in those shivering moments of early-morning flight she certainly *had* known what she was leaving behind, even if she had rather a hazy idea of what she was going to. She despised their house, their back yard, their photo albums, their vacations, their *Cuisinart*, their *powder room*, their walk-in closets, their underground lawn-sprinkling system. In the brief note she left, she had used the word "authentic."

I have always felt the need of a more authentic kind of life. I know I cannot expect you to understand this.

The bus had stopped now at a gas station in the first town on the way. It was the very station that she and Clark used to drive to, in their early days, to buy cheap gas. In those days, their world had included several towns in the surrounding countryside, and they had sometimes behaved like tourists, sampling the specialties in grimy hotel bars. Pigs' feet, sauerkraut, potato pancakes, beer. They would sing all the way home like crazy hillbillies.



But after a while all outings came to be seen as a waste of time and money. They were what people did before they understood the realities of their lives.

She was crying now—her eyes had filled up without her realizing it. She tried to think about Toronto, the first steps ahead. The taxi, the house she had never seen, the strange bed she would sleep in alone. Looking in the phone book tomorrow for the addresses of riding stables, then getting to wherever they were, asking for a job.

She could not picture it. Herself riding on the subway or a streetcar, caring for new horses, talking to new people, living among hordes of people every day who were not Clark. A life, a place, chosen for that specific reason: that it would not contain Clark.

The strange and terrible thing about that world of the future, as she now pictured it, was that she would not exist in it. She would only walk around, and open her mouth and speak, and do this and do that. She would not really be there. And what was strange about it was that she was doing all this, she was riding on this bus, in the hope of recovering herself. As Mrs. Jamieson might say—and as she herself might have said with satisfaction—*taking charge of her own life.* With nobody glowering over her, nobody's mood infecting her with misery, no implacable mysterious silence surrounding her.

But what would she care about? How would she know that she was alive?

While she was running away from him—now—Clark still kept his place in her life. But when she was finished running away, when she just went on, what would she put in his place? What else—who else—could ever be so vivid a challenge?

She managed to stop crying but she had started to shake. She was in a bad way and would have to take hold, get a grip on herself. "Get a grip on yourself," Clark had sometimes told her, passing through a room where she was scrunched up, trying not to weep, and that indeed was what she must do now.

They had stopped in another town.

This was the third town away from the one where she had got on the bus, which meant that they had passed through the second town without her even noticing. The bus must have stopped, the driver must have called out the name, and she had not heard or seen anything, in her fog of fright. Soon enough, they would reach the highway, they would be tearing along toward Toronto.

And she would be lost.

She would be lost. What would be the point of getting into a taxi and giving the new address, of getting up in the morning and brushing her teeth and going into the world?

Her feet seemed now to be at some enormous distance from her body. Her knees in the unfamiliar crisp pants were weighted with irons. She was sinking to the ground like a stricken horse.

Already the bus had loaded on the few passengers and parcels that had been waiting in this town. A woman and a baby in its stroller were waving goodbye to somebody. The building behind them, the café that served as a bus stop, was also in motion; a liquefying wave passed through the bricks and windows as if they were about to dissolve. In peril, Carla pulled her huge body, her iron limbs, forward. She stumbled. She cried out, "Let me off."

The driver braked. He called back irritably, "I thought you were going to Toronto." People gave her casually curious looks. No one seemed to understand that she was in anguish.

"I have to get off here."

"There's a washroom in the back."

"No. No. I have to get off."

"I'm not waiting. You understand that? You got luggage underneath?"

"No. Yes. No."

"No luggage?"

A voice in the bus said, "Claustrophobia. That's what's the matter with her."

"You sick?" the driver said.

"No. No. I just want off."

"O.K. O.K. Fine by me."

Come and get me. Please. Come and get me.

I will.

The door was not locked. And it occurred to Sylvia that she should be locking it now, not opening it, but it was too late, she had it open.

And nobody there.

Yet she was sure, sure, that the knocking had been real.

She closed the door and this time she locked it.

There was a playful sound, a tinkling tapping sound, coming from the wall of windows. She switched the light on, but saw nothing there, and switched it off again. Some animal—maybe a squirrel? The French doors leading to the patio had not been locked, either. Not even really closed, since she had left them open an inch or so to air the house. She started to close them, and then somebody laughed, close by, close enough to be in the room with her.

"It's me," a man said. "Did I scare you?"

He was pressed against the glass of the door; he was right beside her.

"It's Clark," he said. "Clark from down the road."

She was not going to ask him in, but she was afraid to shut the door in his face. He might grab it before she could get it closed. She didn't want to turn on the light, either. She slept in a T-shirt. She should have pulled the quilt from the sofa and wrapped it around herself, but it was too late now.

"Did you want to get dressed?" he said. "What I got in here could be the very things you need."

He had a shopping bag in his hand. He thrust it at her, but did not try to move forward with it.

"What?" she said in a choppy voice.

"Look and see. It's not a bomb. There, take it."

She felt inside the bag, not looking. Something soft. And then she recognized the buttons of the jacket, the silk of the shirt, the belt on the pants.

"Just thought you'd better have them back," he said. "They're yours, aren't they?"

She tightened her jaw so that her teeth wouldn't chatter. A fearful dryness had attacked her mouth and throat.

"I understood they were yours," he said.

Her tongue moved like a wad of wool. She forced herself to say, "Where's Carla?"

"You mean my wife Carla?"

Now she could see his face more clearly. She could see how he was enjoying himself.

"My wife Carla is at home in bed. Where she belongs."

He was both handsome and silly-looking. Tall, lean, well built, but with a slouch that seemed artificial. A contrived, self-conscious air of menace. A lock of dark hair falling over his forehead, a vain little mustache, eyes that appeared both hopeful and mocking, a boyish smile perpetually on the verge of a sulk.

She had always disliked the sight of him—she had mentioned her dislike to Leon, who said that the man was just unsure of himself, just a bit too friendly. The fact that he was unsure of himself would not make her any safer.

"Pretty worn out," he said. "After her little adventure. You should have seen your face—you should have seen the look on you when you recognized those clothes. What did you think? Did you think I'd murdered her?"

"I was surprised," Sylvia said.

"I bet you were. After you were such a big help to her running away."

"I helped her—" Sylvia said with considerable effort. "I helped her because she seemed to be in distress."

"Distress," he said, as if examining the word. "I guess she was. She was in very big distress when she jumped off that bus and got on the phone to me to come and get her. She was crying so hard I could hardly make out what it was she was saying."

"She wanted to come back?"

"Oh, yeah. You bet she wanted to come back. She was in real hysterics to come back. She is a girl who is very up and down in her emotions. But I guess you don't know her as well as I do."

"She seemed quite happy to be going."

"Did she really? Well, I have to take your word for it. I didn't come here to argue with you."

Sylvia said nothing.

"Actually, I came here not just to return those clothes. I came here to tell you that I don't appreciate you interfering in my life with my wife."

"She is a human being," Sylvia said, though she knew that it would be better if she could keep quiet. "Besides being your wife."

"My goodness, is that so? My wife is a human being? Really? Thank you for the information. But don't try getting smart with me. *Sylvia.*"

"I wasn't trying to get smart."

"Good. I'm glad you weren't. I don't want to get mad. I just have a couple of important things to say to you. One thing—that I don't want you sticking your nose in anywhere, anytime, in my life. Another—that I'm not going to want her coming around here anymore. Not that she is going to want to come, I'm pretty sure of that. She doesn't have too good an opinion of you at the moment. And it's time you learned how to clean your own house. Now—" he said. "Now. Has that sunk in?"

"Quite sufficiently."

"Oh, I really hope it has. I hope so."

Sylvia said, "Yes."

"And you know what else I think?"

"What?"

"I think you owe me something."

"What?"

"I think you owe me—you owe me an apology."

Sylvia said, "All right. If you think so. I'm sorry."

He shifted, perhaps just to put out his hand, and with the movement of his body she shrieked.

He laughed. He put his hand on the doorframe to make sure she didn't close it.

"*What's that?*"

"What's what?" he said, as if she were trying out a trick and it would not work. But then he caught sight of something reflected in the window, and he snapped around to look.

Not far from the house was a wide shallow patch of land that often filled up with night fog at this time of year. The fog was there tonight, had been there all this while. But now the fog had changed. It had thickened, taken on a separate shape, transformed itself into something spiky and radiant. First, a live dandelion ball, tumbling forward, then it condensed itself into an unearthly sort of animal, pure white, hellbent, something like a giant unicorn rushing at them.

"Jesus Christ," Clark said softly. He grabbed hold of Sylvia's shoulder. This touch did not alarm her at all—she accepted it with the knowledge that he did it either to protect her or to reassure himself.

Then the vision exploded. Out of the fog, and out of the magnifying light—now revealed to be that of a car travelling along this back road, probably in search of a place to park—out of this appeared a white goat. A little dancing white goat, hardly bigger than a sheepdog.

Clark let go. He said, "Where the Christ did you come from?"

"It's your goat," Sylvia said. "Isn't it your goat?"

"Flora," he said. "Flora."

The goat had stopped a yard or so away from them, had turned shy, and hung her head.

"Flora," Clark said. "Where the hell did you come from? You scared the shit out of us."

Us.

Flora came closer but still did not look up. She butted against Clark's legs.

"Goddam stupid animal," he said shakily.

"She was lost," Sylvia said.

"Yeah. She was. Never thought we'd see her again, actually."

Flora looked up. The moonlight caught a glitter in her eyes.

"Scared the shit out of us," Clark said to her. "We thought you were a ghost."

"It was the effect of the fog," Sylvia said. She stepped out of the door now, onto the patio. Quite safe.

"Yeah."

"Then the lights of that car."

"Like an apparition," he said, recovering. And pleased that he had thought of this description.

"Yes."

"The goat from outer space. That's what you are. You are a goddam goat from outer space," he said, patting Flora. But when Sylvia put out her hand to do the same Flora immediately lowered her head as if preparing to butt.

"Goats are unpredictable," Clark said. "They can seem tame but they're not really. Not after they grow up."

"Is she grown up? She looks so small."

"She's as big as she's ever going to get."

They stood looking down at the goat, as if hoping that she would provide them with more conversation. But she apparently was not going to. From this moment, they could go neither forward nor back. Sylvia believed that she might have seen a shadow of regret in his eyes that this was so.

But he acknowledged it. He said, "It's late."

"I guess it is," Sylvia said, just as if this had been an ordinary visit.

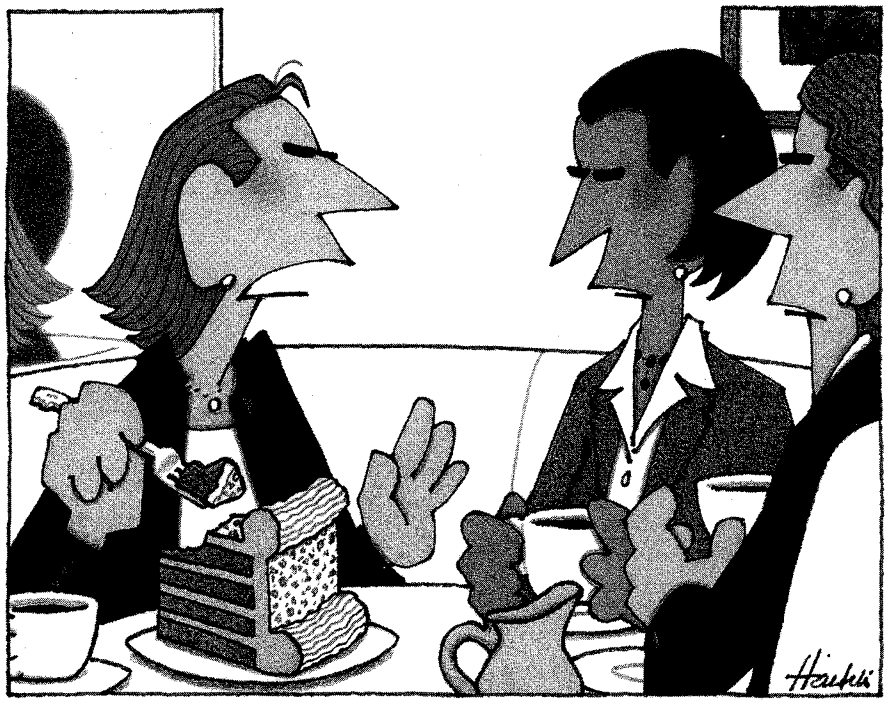
"O.K., Flora. Time for us to go home."

"I'll make other arrangements for help if I need it," she said. "I probably won't need it now, anyway." She added lightly, "I'll stay out of your hair."

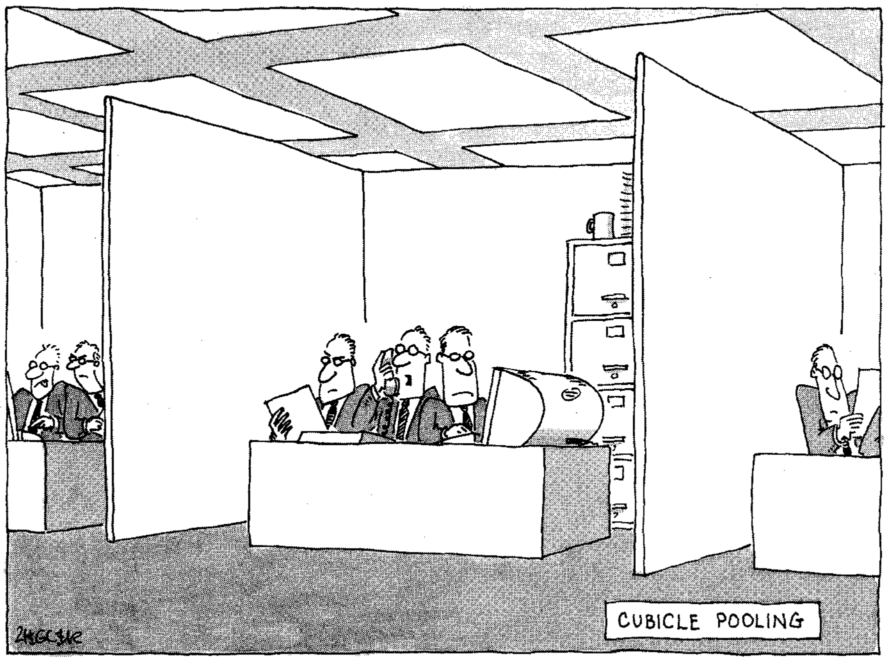
"Sure," he said. "You'd better get inside. You'll get cold."

"Good night," she said. "Good night, Flora."

The phone rang then.



"I set a goal, I met it, I proved that I could meet it, and now the hell with it."



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"Excuse me."

"Good night."

It was Ruth.

"Ah," Sylvia said. "A change in plans."

She did not sleep, thinking of the little goat, whose appearance out of the fog seemed to her more and more magical. She even wondered if, possibly, Leon could have had something to do with it. If she were a poet, she would write a poem about something like this. But in her experience the subjects that she thought a poet would write about had not appealed to Leon, who was—who had been—the real thing.

Carla had not heard Clark go out, but she woke when he came in.

He told her that he had just been checking around the barn.

"A car went along the road a while ago, and I wondered what it was doing here. I couldn't get back to sleep till I went out and checked whether everything was O.K."

"So, was it?"

"Far as I could see. And then while I was up," he said, "I thought I might as well pay a visit up the road. I took the clothes back."

Carla sat up in bed.

"You didn't wake her up?"

"She woke up. It was O.K. We had a little talk."

"Oh."

"It was O.K."

"You didn't mention any of that stuff, did you?"

"I didn't mention it."

"It really was all made up. It really was. You have to believe me. It was all a lie."

"O.K."

"You have to believe me."

"Then I believe you."

"I made it all up."

"O.K."

He got into bed.

"Did you get your feet wet?" she said.

"Heavy dew."

He turned to her.

"Come here," he said. "When I read your note, it was just like I went hollow inside. It's true. I felt like I didn't have anything left in me."

The bright weather had continued. On the streets, in the stores, in the post office, people greeted each other by saying that summer had finally arrived. The pasture grass and even the poor beaten crops lifted up their heads. The puddles dried up, the mud turned to dust. A light warm wind blew and everybody felt like doing things again. The phone rang. Inquiries about trail rides, about riding lessons. Summer camps cancelled their trips to museums, and minivans drew up, loaded with restless children. The horses pranced along the fences, freed from their blankets.

Clark had managed to get hold of a piece of roofing at a good price. He had spent the whole first day after Runaway Day (that was how they referred to Carla's bus trip) fixing the roof of the exercise ring.

For a couple of days, as they went about their chores, he and Carla would wave at each other. If she happened to pass close to him and there was nobody else around, Carla might kiss his shoulder through the light material of his summer shirt.

"If you ever try to run away on me again I'll tan your hide," he said to her, and she said, "Who are you now—Clint Eastwood?"

Then she said, "*Would* you?"

"What?"

"Tan my hide?"

"Damn right."

Birds were everywhere. Red-winged blackbirds, robins, a pair of doves that sang at daybreak. Lots of crows, and gulls on reconnoitering missions from the lake, and big turkey buzzards that sat in the branches of a dead oak about half a mile away, at the edge of the woods. At first they just sat there, drying out their voluminous wings, lifting themselves occasionally for a trial flight, flapping around a bit, then composing themselves, to let the sun and the warm air do their work. In a day or so, they were restored, flying high, circling and dropping to earth, disappearing over the woods, coming back to rest in the familiar bare tree.

Lizzie Borden's owner—Joy Tucker—showed up again, tanned and friendly. She had got sick of the rain, and gone off on her holidays to hike in the Rocky Mountains. Now she was back. Perfect timing.

She and Clark treated each other warily at first, but they were soon joking as if nothing had happened.

"Lizzie looks to be in good shape," she said. "But where's her little friend?"

"Gone," Clark said. "Maybe she took off to the Rocky Mountains."

"Lots of wild goats out there. With fantastic horns."

"So I hear."

For three or four days they had been too busy to go down and look in the mailbox. When Carla opened it, she found the phone bill, a promise that if they subscribed to a certain magazine they could win a million dollars, and Mrs. Jamieson's letter.

My Dear Carla,
I have been thinking about the (rather dramatic) events of the last few days and I find myself talking to myself, but really to you, so often that I thought I must speak to you, even if—the best way I can do now—only in a letter. And don't worry—you do not have to answer me.

Mrs. Jamieson went on to say that she was afraid she had involved herself too closely in Carla's life and had made the mistake of thinking somehow that Carla's freedom and happiness were the same thing. All she cared for was Carla's happiness, and she saw now that she—Carla—had found that in her marriage. All she could hope was that perhaps Carla's flight and turbulent emotions had brought her true feelings to the surface, and perhaps a recognition in her husband of his true feelings as well.

She said that she would perfectly understand if Carla wished to avoid her in the future and that she would always be grateful for Carla's presence in her life during such a difficult time.

The strangest and most wonderful thing in this whole string of events seems to me the reappearance of Flora. In fact, it seems rather like a miracle. Where had she been all that time and why did she choose just that moment to reappear? I am sure your husband has described it to you. We were talking at the patio door, and I—facing out—was the first to see this white something, descending on us out of the night. Of course it was the effect of the ground fog. But truly terrifying. I think I shrieked out loud. I had never in my life felt such bewitchment, in the true sense. I suppose I should be honest and say fear. There we were, two adults, frozen, and then out of the fog comes little lost Flora.

There has to be something special about this. I know, of course, that Flora is an ordinary little animal and that she probably spent her time away getting herself pregnant. In a sense, her return has no connection at all with our human lives. Yet her appearance at that moment did have a profound effect on your husband and me. When two human beings divided by hostility are both, at the same time, mystified by the same apparition, there is a bond that springs up between them, and they find themselves united in the most unexpected way. United in their humanity—that is the only way I can describe it. We parted almost as friends. So Flora has her place as a good angel in my life and perhaps also in your husband's life and yours.

With all my good wishes,
Sylvia Jamieson

As soon as Carla had read this letter she crumpled it up. Then she burned it in the sink. The flames leaped up alarmingly and she turned on the tap, then scooped up the soft disgusting black stuff and put it down the toilet, as she should have done in the first place.

She was busy for the rest of that day, and the next, and the next. During that time, she had to take two parties out on the trails, she had to give lessons to children, individually and in groups. At night when Clark put his arms around her—he was generally in good spirits now—she did not find it hard to be coöperative. She dreamed of things that were of no importance, that made no sense.

It was as if she had a murderous needle somewhere in her lungs, and by breathing carefully she could avoid feeling it. But every once in a while she had to take a deep breath, and it was still there.

Sylvia Jamieson had taken an apartment in the college town where she taught. The house was not up for sale—or at least there wasn't a sign out in front of it. Leon Jamieson had got some kind of posthumous award—news of this was in the papers. There was no mention of any money.

As the dry golden days of fall came on—an encouraging and profitable season—Carla found that she had got used to the sharp thought that had lodged inside her. It wasn't so sharp anymore; in fact, it no longer surprised her. She was inhabited now by an almost seductive notion, a constant low-lying temptation.

She had only to raise her eyes, she had only to look in one direction, to know where she might go. An evening walk, once her chores for the day were finished. To the edge of the woods, and the bare tree where she had seen the buzzards.

Where she might find the little dirty bones in the grass. The skull, with shreds of bloodied skin still clinging to it, that she could settle in one hand. Knowledge in one hand.

Or perhaps not.

Suppose something else had happened. Suppose he had chased Flora away, or tied her in the back of the truck and driven some distance and let her loose. Taken her back to the place they'd got her from. Not to have her around, reminding them of this bad time.

The days passed and she didn't go. She held out against the temptation. ♦

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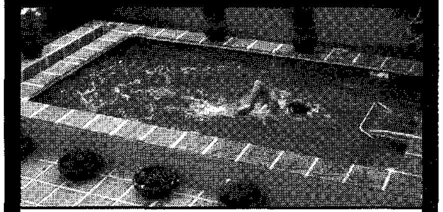

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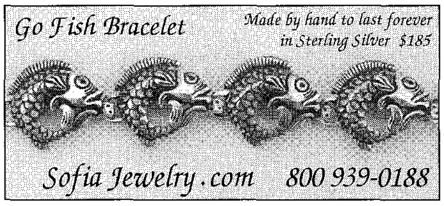

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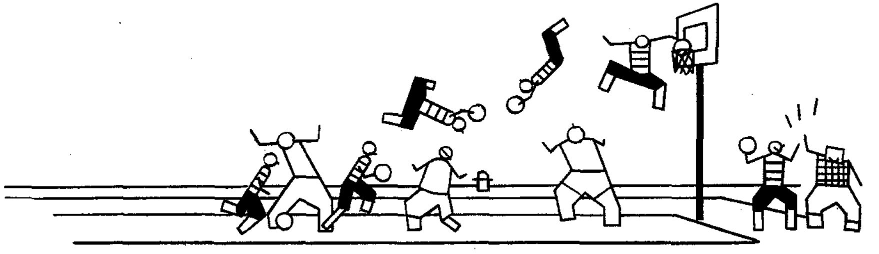

THE THEATRE

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Puppets and poets onstage.

BY HILTON ALS

The musical puppet-and-people show "Avenue Q" (at the Golden) has so much to recommend it—an exceptionally gifted cast, a strong book by Jeff Whitty, with equally strong music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, and the splendid direction of Jason Moore—that to focus on the highs in the production is rather like begging at a banquet when one's plate and cup are full to overflowing. But not to single out the remarkable Ann Harada—a funny girl who can sing, act, and let the audience in on the joke all at the same time—would be a mistake. Harada's character, Christmas Eve, a Japanese-born therapist who can't seem to book a client, lives on Avenue Q, in an unspecified New York City borough, with her fiancé, Brian (Jordan Gelber), an unemployed caterer who once harbored dreams of becoming a comedian on late-night TV. "But I'm thirty-two and as you can see / I'm not. Oh well. / It sucks to be me," he sings in the show's opening song. The couple live on the same street as a slacker named Nicky (Rick Lyon) and his closeted gay roommate Rod (John Tartaglia); a kindergarten teacher's aide, Kate Monster, and a lounge singer called Lucy T. Slut (both performed by the great Stephanie D'Abruzzo); and the former child star Gary Coleman (played by Natalie Venetia Belcon), now a building superintendent, who is reduced to wearing a tool belt along with his cynicism. (Some of these characters are represented by people, others by puppets, manipulated by actors who double as puppeteers.)

An ingenious combination of "The Real World" and "Sesame Street," the show presents the friends on Avenue Q as something both more and less than "Friends." In a city where dreams are invariably dashed—when they're not disseminated on Gap ads—the neighbors perform a cranky and adorable skit called Life. Smart, college-educated twenty- and thirty-somethings who probably once wrote papers on Milton, they wake up every morning to find themselves a little fatter around the middle, living through "Paradise Lost." Take Christmas Eve. After Brian and the others bemoan their fate, she sings some of her own story in "Everyone's a Little Bit Racist": "I'm coming to this country / For opportunities / Trained to work in Korean deli / But I am Japanese."

The newest arrival in the neighborhood, a fresh-out-of-college optimist called Princeton (also played by Tartaglia), has an orange felt head and bright cloth eyes that are indicative of his general resistance to the exigencies of life. He won't let Avenue Q or its air of acrid disappointment get to him. He's a young man-puppet on the rise—especially when he takes up with Lucy T. Slut, a puppet with blond hair, a round head, and a wide slit for a mouth, through which she drops innuendos about her own divine irresistibility, whenever she's not acting it out. Lucy brings to mind a present-day Mae West—a woman of experience who's as likely to be found doing crystal meth with the boys in Chelsea as wrecking Kate Monster's relationship with Princeton. She's a cloth Jezebel. Is it possible to be attracted to a puppet? D'Abruzzo gives Lucy so much verve that when she saunters offstage in D'Abruzzo's hand—all the puppets are handheld—you want to follow her with wolf whistles.

In despair over Lucy's machinations, and burning in the twin fires of love and jealousy, Kate goes to Christmas Eve for advice. In the heartbreaking contralto of a potty-mouthed, subway-riding Madame Butterfly, Christmas Eve, her face turned to the heavens, sings, "The more you love someone / The more you wishing him dead. / Sometime you look at him and only see fat and lazy / And wanting baseball bat for hitting him on his head." In her own way, Christmas Eve has accomplished what hours of analysis couldn't: the loathsome task of accepting another person, on or off Avenue Q, and accepting, too, the boredom that lies at the core of passion. It's easy to see why it takes her so long to secure a patient. Does anyone want a therapist who dishes out the truth?

In the 1990 motion picture "Misery" (based on a book by Stephen King), a novelist is subjected to what may be the worst of all possible fates for a writer: the undivided attention of a fan who locks him up and forces him not only to produce but to produce the kind of material with which he made his name—and which he has been trying to put behind him. The film is a variation on classical tragedy—a horror story in which will, faith, and the mysteries of the human heart are pitted against the forces of evil, forces that forever change the landscape of the protagonist's innocence.

For fans of the poet and novelist Sylvia Plath, who committed suicide at the age of thirty in 1963, the nefarious

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Rick Lyon, John Tartaglia, and Stephanie D'Abruzzo with their puppet counterparts in "Avenue Q."

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force that destroyed her was the same force that made her a poet: her father, whom she memorialized in what remains her most famous poem, "Daddy."

> I have always been scared of *you*,
> With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.
> And your neat moustache
> And your Aryan eye, bright blue.
> Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You—
>
> Not God but a swastika
> So black no sky could squeak through.
> Every woman adores a Fascist,
> The boot in the face, the brute
> Brute heart of a brute like you.

But there's more to the poem than Plath's dissection of her father, the German-born Otto Plath, who died when she was eight, and was by all accounts a cold and withholding man. Plath goes on to describe how she found Daddy all over again when she met and married the English poet Ted Hughes:

> I made a model of you,
> A man in black with a Meinkampf look
>
> And a love of the rack and the screw.
> And I said I do, I do.

That this is the emotional trajectory we imagine when we read any other part of Plath's considerable body of work is a testament not only to Plath's skill as a self-mythologizing memoirist but also to our need to believe in the drama of her tortured genius. Confronted with the broad range of her artistry, we are like the deranged fan in "Misery": we lock her up in a room and force her to turn out "Daddy" again and again.

The text of Paul Alexander's monologue "Edge" (at the DR2) is no exception to the rule, and it does little to expand our view of Plath's life as a woman or as an artist. Alexander, who also directed this one-woman show, is the author of "Rough Magic," a biography of Plath, and of "Ariel Ascending: Writings About Sylvia Plath," and he is clearly at home with the material. Unfortunately, however, he has invested his play with an agenda. He uses the facts of Plath's life to prove a point: Otto and Ted *made* her do it. Still, in a troubling and powerful performance, Angelica Torn makes us see what the script does not—the extent to which Plath, who believed that she didn't exist unless she was being subjugated by a man, manufactured her own downfall.

"This is the last day of my life," Torn, as Plath, says, greeting us from a stage that is bare except for a chair and an end table with a glass of water and a notebook on it. She goes on, "You may think that I would be all maudlin and weepy about this, but you would be wrong. I am a strong, resilient woman." In a gray cotton dress with a fitted bodice, sensible black shoes, and bright-red lipstick that brings to mind the blood imagery that makes some of Plath's poems so vivid ("A mouth just bloodied. / Little bloody skirts! . . . / If my mouth could marry a hurt like that!" she wrote in "Poppies in July"), Torn, the daughter of the actors Rip Torn and Geraldine Page, has a witchy verve that recalls her mother's attention to the details of character. She doesn't ingratiate herself with the audience or seek to charm. Rather, she lets her bitter, flat tones of voice work in contrast to her almost ladylike demeanor—the body language of the well-brought-up girl, afraid to get anything less than straight A's, who has sold her soul to fit other people's images of perfection.

In the course of two hours, Torn conveys all the fire and brimstone beneath Plath's façade. "Ted loomed over me, naked and luminous in the hot white sheets," she says, recounting a trip the new lovers made to Paris. "His body was damp with sweat, as was mine. And then, in the inexplicable passion of the moment, he reached down to the floor for his belt. It was thin and black, and when it struck the skin it made a pop as sudden as the pain." This is an extraordinary moment: Torn throws herself to the ground and tears her dress open, and, if it weren't for our understanding that, like most slaves, Plath was also a master, we would cry out to save her from Hughes's bruising. In the second half of the play, Torn illustrates Plath's descent into a form of madness that makes a certain sense: if she cannot achieve perfection, what is the point of achieving anything? Ted leaves her, but Ted is weak. The woman he leaves her for, obsessed with Plath, asphyxiates herself and her child, beside a trunk of Plath's unpublished writings. (Although this is recited as fact here, it is only "unsubstantiated rumor" in Alexander's biography.) By the time Plath died, Torn's sterling performance tells us, she had become the daddy she loved and feared: a strict, angry, unforgiving ghost. ♦

BOOKS

LOVE'S LABORS

Monogamy, marriage, and other menaces.

BY REBECCA MEAD

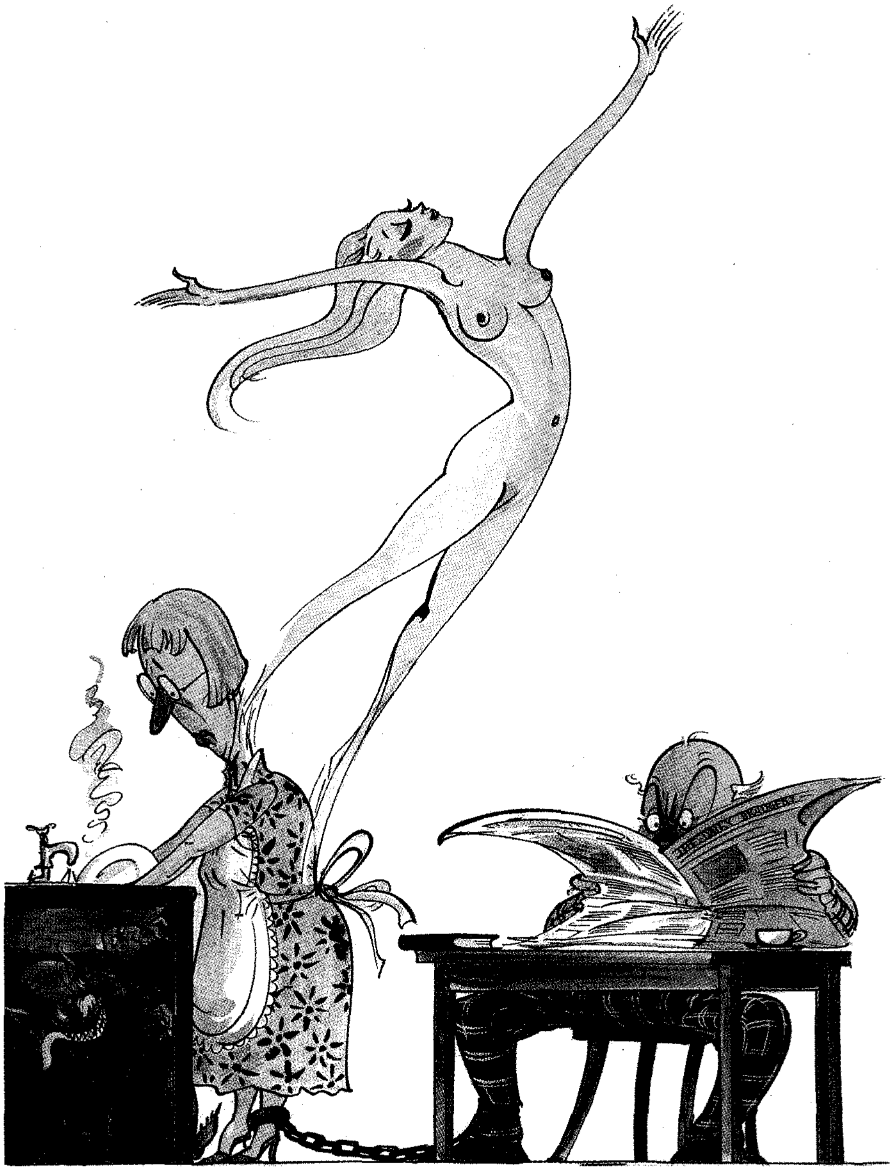
In 1643, John Milton published his "Doctrine & Discipline of Divorce," an essay addressed to the members of the English Parliament, in which he deplored matrimonial laws that imprisoned the unhappily married in "a drooping and disconsolate household captivity, without refuge or redemption." But the "Doctrine of Divorce" is also the reverse of what its title suggests: in defending divorce, Milton offers a meditation on what a marriage worth the name might consist of. In his tenderest phrase, Milton (whose own first, unhappy marriage must have been instructive in these matters) writes, "In God's intention, a meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and noblest end of marriage." Milton would have understood "conversation" in a broader sense than we do now. The word derives from the Latin verb *conversari*, which means to live together, with connotations of habitual proximity and coöperation. Milton is not referring to marital chatter about school districts or visits to the in-laws or the follies of the Bush Administration, or even the familiar, forlorn spousal inquiry "What are you thinking about?" The conversation of true marriage, he suggests, is an intimate, easy, fruitful intercourse: not talk but life itself.

In a droll, overstated new book, "Against Love: A Polemic" (Pantheon; $24), Laura Kipnis describes a different kind of marital conversation. "As is true of all human languages, the language of coupledom is governed by a finite set of rules that determine what can be verbalized and how," she writes in a section titled "Couple Linguistics 101." "Close observation reveals that this is a language comprising one recurring unit of speech: the interdiction." Kipnis spends the next ten pages of her book enumerating some of those interdictions, "a catalogue of strictures, commands and punishments so unending that you will begin to wonder why no one has yet invoked the Geneva Convention when it comes to couple relations":

> You can't leave the dishes for later, wash the dishes badly, not use soap, drink straight from the container, make crumbs without wiping them up (now, not later), or load the dishwasher according to the method that seems most sensible to you. . . .You can't not make the bed. You can't not express appreciation when the other person makes the bed even if you don't care. You can't sleep apart, you can't go to bed at different times, you can't fall asleep on the couch without getting woken up to go to bed. You can't eat in bed. You can't get out of bed right away after sex. You can't have insomnia without being grilled about what's *really* bothering you.

In Kipnis's characterization, the domestic captivity that is marriage is complete and relentless, with surveillance, repression, and prohibition built into its very structure.

Kipnis teaches in the department of radio, television, and film at Northwestern University, and an earlier incarnation of "Against Love" appeared in 1998 in the journal *Critical Inquiry*. In *Critical Inquiry*, her lively prose was buttressed by footnotes invoking names familiar from the nation's cultural-studies curricula: Herbert Marcuse, Jean Laplanche, Fredric Jameson, Julia Kristeva, and, of course, Marx and Engels. Those references have been considerably pruned



For Laura Kipnis, the institution of marriage means the imprisonment of sexual desire.

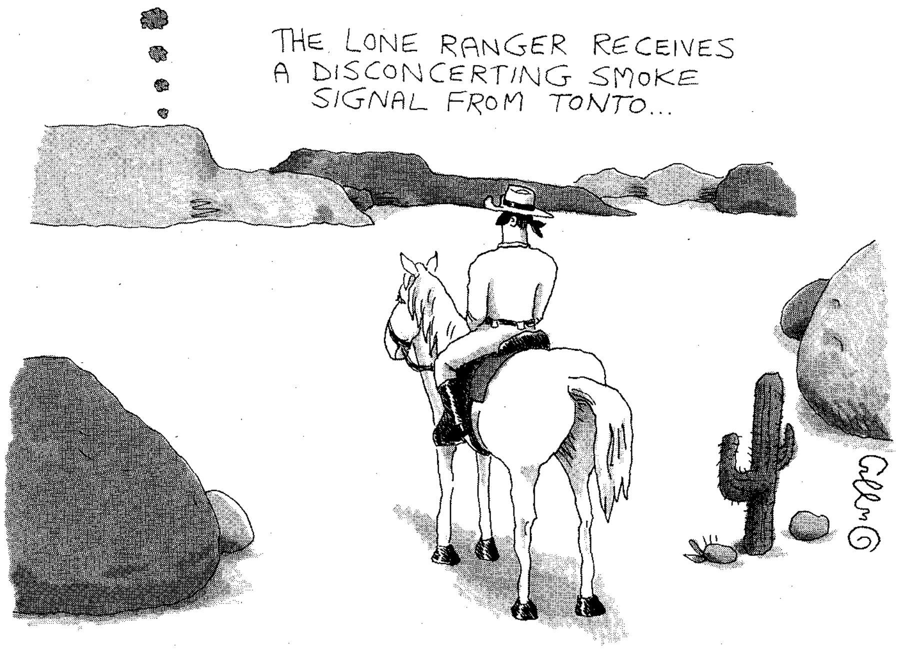
GERALD SCARFE

in the book-length version, though the germ of their ideas still informs the text. The result is a deft indictment of the marital ideal, as well as a celebration of the dissent that constitutes adultery, delivered in pointed daggers of prose. In a typical flourish, Chapter 2 begins, "Adultery is one way of protesting the confines of coupled life; of course there's always murder." Reading Kipnis is rather like sitting next to an engagingly acerbic guest at a dinner party—great fun for an evening, if somewhat curdling to the digestion.

Kipnis, alighting upon the psychotherapeutic bromide that relationships take work, asks, "When did the rhetoric of the factory become the default language of love?" It's an interesting question, but she doesn't answer it. Instead, she takes the metaphor of work at its word, characterizing ours as an age "when monogamy becomes labor, when desire is organized contractually, with accounts kept and fidelity extracted like labor from employees, with marriage a domestic factory policed by means of rigid shop-floor discipline."

And this, of course, is where Marx comes in: "If love is the latest form of alienated labor, would rereading 'Capital' as a marriage manual be the most appropriate response?" (One could charitably take that "rereading" to be a nice little joke about the preoccupations of cultural-studies academics, rather than an expression of it.) Pursuing the analogy of love and labor, Kipnis declares that marital fidelity inevitably evolves into what she calls, after Marx, "surplus monogamy: enforced compliance rather than a free expression of desire." Submitting to the repressive regime of marriage, then, is an enactment in miniature of a larger and more tragic social conformity.

Much of the book consists of an argument against companionate coupledom, the condition to which—or so popular culture, legal systems, and religious institutions insist—we all aspire. "Domestic coupledom [is] modern love's mandatory barracks," Kipnis says. "Domestic coupledom is the boot camp for compliant citizenship." In support of her case, she cites the familiar divorce statistics showing that half of all American marriages end in divorce; the resigned verdicts passed upon the institution of matrimony by such authorities as Sigmund Freud ("One does not venture to declare aloud and openly that marriage is not an arrangement calculated to satisfy a man's sexuality, unless one is driven to do so perhaps by the love of truth and eagerness for reform"); and the well-rehearsed argument that romantic love as the foundation of an enduring marriage is an invention of modernity, unknown to ancient Greeks, courtly lovers, or the centuries' worth of marriageable sons and daughters who served as currency in parental property transactions.


THE LONE RANGER RECEIVES A DISCONCERTING SMOKE SIGNAL FROM TONTO...

"What Kemo Sabe wearing?"

The structure of contemporary marriage, with its expectations of lifetime fidelity, belongs to the apparatus of state control. A population that willingly polices itself through the interdictions of married life, Kipnis argues, has given up any revolutionary strivings, and will submit to other repressive social orders—capitalism, say—without protest. "Let's imagine that to achieve consensus and continuity, any society is required to produce the kinds of character structures and personality types it needs to achieve its objective," she writes. "*What* mysterious force or mind-altering substance could compel an entire population into such total social integration without them even noticing it happening, or uttering the tiniest peep of protest? What if it could be accomplished through *love*?"

The hero of Kipnis's story is adultery. Conducting an adulterous affair amounts to a courageous insurrection against an inhuman social order. "Adultery is the sit-down strike of the love-takes-work ethic," she says; it is, in fact, the "anarcho-syndicalism of private life." And she has the revolutionary's disdain for ameliorist measures. Addressing marital dissatisfaction through divorce and remarriage amounts, in her view, to a submission to cultural norms: serial monogamy, the approved cultural therapy for the failure of monogamy proper, is "liberal reformism writ familial"—the participants change, but the institution survives intact. Kipnis, who, unfortunately, feels the need to preface her book with the explanation that a polemic is inherently extremist and not to be taken entirely seriously, suggests that the structure of marriage might be rethought. "It's generally understood that falling in love means committing to *commitment*," she writes. "Different social norms could entail something entirely different: yearly renewable contracts, for example."

Given the census data on divorce, Kipnis suggests, the reasonable thing to do would be to factor the likely demise of half of American marriages into policy decisions. Instead, the public has been subject to lectures on marital rectitude by politicians like Newt Gingrich and Bob Livingston, who have either transgressed their own nuptial vows or vowed marital fidelity successively to different women. Kipnis devotes much of

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her book to the way that adultery, in the nineteen-nineties, burst out of the private sphere and into the political, creating a new political style, which she describes as spousal: "Would you want to be married to this politician?" Bill Clinton was hardly the first adulterous United States President, but his transgressions, she suggests, occurred at a moment when the self-deception upon which the concept of monogamy is founded could no longer be sustained. The Clinton-Lewinsky scandal provided an arena for the national ambivalence about marriage: "If there were a Starr Report on every American marriage, the institution would instantly crumble, never to recover."

Kipnis is disappointed in Clinton for failing to embrace his inner adulterer and for capitulating to the ruling marital order with his denials, apologies, and efforts to patch things up with his wife, now Senator Clinton. (Yes, he would want to be married to this politician.) A better role model, she thinks, is Steven R. Johnson, the ranking Republican in the Indiana state senate. When he was found to have committed "inappropriate" relations with one of his interns, he admitted to the affair, expressed regret, was removed from his committee chairmanship, and was ultimately separated from his wife. In the midst of all that, he issued a public statement saying that, "in a very strange sense," he had been given "an opportunity to start my life again."

Kipnis considers this quickening newness to be adultery's highest good: "It is at least a reliable way of proving to ourselves that we're not quite in the ground yet." She is extremely funny on the allures of extramarital romance, describing the overdetermined encounter at the academic conference ("You slowly become aware of a muffled but not completely unfamiliar feeling stirring deep within, a distant rumbling getting louder and louder, like a herd of elephants massing on the bushveld. . . . Oh, God, it's your *libido*, once a well-known freedom fighter, now a sorry, shriveled thing, from swaggering outlaw to model citizen, Janis Joplin to Barry Manilow in just a few short decades") which leads to the secret phone calls, the elaborately concealed meetings, and the flushed exchanges. She's gimlet-eyed about the myriad self-deceptions of adultery—the conviction that one's lover has the powers of understanding of Socrates, the sexual technique of Casanova, and the capacity for sympathy of Mother Teresa—and about the arrangement's narcissistic rewards. "What really keeps you glued to the phone till all hours of the night—conversations sparkling with soulfulness and depth you hadn't known you possessed, exchanging those searching whispered intimacies—is a very different new love-object: yourself. The new beloved mirrors this fascinating new self back to you, and admit it, you're madly in love with both of them." Though Kipnis is aware that adultery has its own contradictions (it couldn't exist without marriage, for starters), she is won over by what it offers: a rekindling of sexual desire.

Indeed, for someone with such a skeptical eye for the supposed eternal verities, Kipnis gives lust a free ride. "We're inherently desiring creatures," she says. "And sometimes desire just won't take no for an answer." For all her insistence on the historical specificity of our notions of romantic love, Kipnis treats the kind of sexual desire that surfaces during academic conferences as if it were transhistorical and transcultural, rather than being conditional upon the ready availability of a range of alternative partners and effective contraception, both of which are historical novelties, particularly for women. Kipnis is at her most incisive when writing about what she considers to be the desire-free zone of a long-term marriage. "Embarrassing, isn't it, how long you can go without it, if you don't remember to have it, and how much more inviting a good night's sleep can seem compared to those over-rehearsed acts," she writes. "Even though it used to be pretty good—if memory serves—before there was all that sarcasm. Or disappointment. Or children. Or *history*."

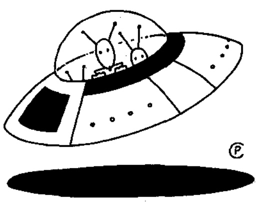
"Against Love" invariably depicts the diminishing of sexual desire as a loss, and although it is a taboo of contemporary culture to admit to feeling otherwise, this was not always the case: it isn't hard to see why women exhausted by years of dangerous childbearing might happily have greeted the ebbing of sexual desire, particularly that of their partner. Kipnis does pay lip service to the functions of marriage beyond the sexual—"Companionship, shared housing costs, childrearing convenience, reassuring predictability, occasional sex, insurance against the destabilizing effects of non-domestic desire"—but her enumeration seems delivered in the spirit of those legally required disclosures of pharmaceutical side effects. Unfettered sexual desire, for her, trumps all other inclinations. That view, as it happens, puts her in the company of the conservative churchmen against whom Milton railed in his divorce tract, since just about the only ground on which a divorce could be granted in the mid-seventeenth century was that of adultery. To Milton, this amounted to a sacrilegious reduction of marriage to nothing but a venue for sexual relations: "What is this but secretly to instruct us, that however many grave reasons are pretended to the married life, yet that nothing indeed is thought worth regard therein but the prescribed satisfaction of an irrational heat?" Kipnis's celebration of this irrational heat leaves no room for the notion that the first achings of desire might evolve within marriage into less thermal satisfactions.

"Falling in love is the nearest most of us come to glimpsing utopia in our lifetimes (with sex and drugs as fallbacks)," she writes. But what if utopia was not merely glimpsed in the heady, vanishing moment of falling in love but was actually the project of enduring love? What if the expression of that love was the ongoing construction of a better world in domestic microcosm—of Milton's meet and happy conversation? Rather than seeing each individual marriage as a cog in a tyrannical industrial machine that manufactures large-scale social docility, we might re-reread Marx to come up with an alternative understanding of how the language of work might relate to the language of love. Perhaps love isn't necessarily the alienated labor of the factory floor. Perhaps it can be the kind of work that Marx argued was displaced by the inhuman character of industrialization: the meaningful, satisfying work of the farmer or the artisan who remained organically connected to the fruits of his labor, and who was ennobled by this effort. Conducted with imagination, the labor of this love might be so gratifying as to be indistinguishable from play. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Personality, *by Andrew O'Hagan (Harcourt; $25).* In a decayed resort town on the Isle of Bute in the nineteen-seventies, an Italo-Scottish family pins its hopes on the youngest member, Maria, who is working on her singing and her hair. At thirteen, she is whisked off to London, where she wins a talent contest on television. By sixteen, she is a famous pop singer. By twenty, she is anorexic and half-mad. (Soon she also has a homicidal admirer stalking her.) The analysis of her thoughts, a miasma of fear and narcissism, is the core of the novel, but most of the other characters, too, are lonely and obsessed, and are wandering through a world of junk: candy wrappers, catchphrases, TV shows. At the same time, the book is so bustling and rich—we get every old lady and barfly on the island, with their letters, diaries, secrets—that the darkness seems lit from end to end.

What Was She Thinking?, *by Zoë Heller (Henry Holt; $23).* Barbara Covett, a sixtyish history teacher, is the kind of unmarried-woman-with-cat whose female friends sooner or later decide she is "too intense." Thus when a beautiful new pottery teacher, Sheba Hart—a "*wispy* novice with a tinkly accent and see-through skirts"—chooses Barbara as a confidante, she is deeply, even rather sinisterly, gratified. Sheba's secret is explosive: married with two kids, she is having an affair with a fifteen-year-old student. The novel, Heller's second, is Barbara's supposedly objective "history" of the affair and its eventual discovery, written furtively while she and her friend are holed up in a borrowed house, waiting for Sheba's court date. Barbara has appointed herself Sheba's "unofficial guardian," protecting her from the salivating tabloids. Equally adroit at satire and at psychological suspense, Heller charts the course of a predatory friendship and demonstrates the lengths to which some people go for human company.



Spoken Here: Travels Among Threatened Languages, *by Mark Abley (Houghton Mifflin; $25).* Of the six thousand or so languages that exist today, more than ninety per cent are endangered. Abley has travelled as far afield as arctic Canada and the Timor Sea documenting the survival strategies or last gasps of some of these languages. The state of Israel resurrected Hebrew, albeit at the expense of Yiddish and Ladino. Faroese, a descendant of Old Norse, is a source of pride to the inhabitants of the Faeroe Islands, but the young "see Faroese as embodying the past, Danish the present, and English the future." English, the language of the marketplace, is spoken by more people than any other language in history, and Abley seems resigned to the judgment of Li Yang, who claims "to have taught English to more than twenty million Chinese": "Chinese people don't learn English because they love it, but because Coca-Cola and Microsoft rule the world."

Grandes Horizontales, *by Virginia Rounding (Bloomsbury; $25.95).* Nineteenth-century Paris was famous for its highly formalized system of prostitution. The élite of this demimonde were courtesans who entertained aristocrats, artists, and writers such as Dumas and Baudelaire. Rounding focusses on four such cocottes—Apollonie Sabatier, Marie Duplessis, the Englishwoman Cora Pearl, and a Russian Jew known as La Païva—paying particular attention to the legends that surrounded them. Cora Pearl was said to have had herself served up on a silver platter, decorated only with parsley; after La Païva's death, her besotted husband, a Prussian count, reportedly had her embalmed in a glass jar in his castle. Rounding presents a seductive vision of women whose talent for social, financial, and sexual machination allowed them to navigate Second Empire Paris, and whose acts of self-creation and the works of art they inspired have endured longer than the details of their lives.

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

"Buffalo Soldiers" and "The Magdalene Sisters."

BY ANTHONY LANE

You could set up a neat double bill with "Buffalo Soldiers" and "The Magdalene Sisters." Each considers a closed and largely monosexual community—one run by soldiers, the other by nuns, most of whom make the soldiers look like a highly scented species of wallflower. Both films deal thornily with a loveless world, and both have snared themselves in trouble as a result. The military refused all assistance to one movie, and the other has reputedly caused dog collars to burst at the Vatican.

Americans in Stuttgart: Scott Glenn and Joaquin Phoenix.

TOM BACHTELL

"Buffalo Soldiers," co-written and directed by Gregor Jordan, is set on an American Army base near Stuttgart, Germany, in the fateful days of 1989. The story unfolds in Supplies, that heroically unsung section of the service which insures that all the other sections have enough Mop & Glo, for example, to wash their floors. If you are Specialist Ray Elwood (Joaquin Phoenix), the battalion clerk, you refine this basic trade by ordering more Mop & Glo than you require and selling off the excess to a contented German. If you extend your skills to the cooking of heroin, which is then dealt by the sergeant who heads the Military Police, your pockets soon sag with so much cash that you are more or less forced to buy a black Mercedes.

Nobody stands in Elwood's way—certainly not his superior and confidant, Colonel Berman (Ed Harris), the kind of man who apologizes for shouting at an underling. As James Joyce put it, greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his wife for his friend, and Berman doesn't seem to care that the languorous Mrs. Berman (Elizabeth McGovern) is using Elwood as a handy bedroom toy. All is sweet for the Specialist until the arrival of Sergeant Lee (Scott Glenn), who adored his tours of duty in Vietnam, and whose mouth moves so reluctantly in the graven rockface of his features that we are lucky to decipher one line of dialogue in three. Lee has a daughter, Robyn (Anna Paquin), whom Elwood, in a flush of foolhardiness, asks out on a Friday night. Bad move.

"Buffalo Soldiers" is a good dark laugh, and there is a freakish, armored surrealism to certain scenes, like the tank that plows up, in ascending order of chaos, a field, a fruit market, and a local gas station. The problem is that the picture wants to keep company with Robert Altman's "M*A*S*H," but, in truth, it is more like an episode of "The Phil Silvers Show," with a longer running time and a fouler mouth. Gregor Jordan completed the film before September 11, 2001, and Miramax bought it on September 10th, since when, lest it cause offense, it has been biding its time on the shelf. If I were a serving soldier, however, I wouldn't bother to boil up too much steam over it, because you can't accuse a movie of disrespecting something that it doesn't know.

Immediately after the opening credits, the camera pans across a parade ground that is suspiciously frantic with activity, topped off with a passing fleet of computer-generated helicopters. From this moment on, "Buffalo Soldiers" feels fake—true to its vision of scam and subterfuge, which may be what counts, but insolently bored by every aspect of military existence except for boredom itself. I am an eager defender of Joaquin Phoenix, but he seemed far more credible in the guise of a Roman emperor in "Gladiator" than he does as a military clerk in the new film. Elwood doesn't even walk like a soldier, and no Army barber would countenance that springy quiff. You could argue that this is part of the deal—maybe Elwood has so plumped and cushioned his life that his superiors no longer notice his slack demeanor and his mumbled delivery, let alone strive to correct them. But when, in conversation with Berman, he sits down cozily next to the Colonel on the wing of a leather sofa, you just think: Nope. The art of the grifter lies in bending the rules from within, not pretending loftily that they don't exist. That's why Sergeant Bilko used to snap and bark when he had to and kept his saluting crisp.

I suspect that "Buffalo Soldiers" is not about the Army at all. Without much ado, it could have been turned into "Buffalo Management Consultants" or "Buffalo Movie Executives." Any clenched community would suffice, as long as its promotional ladder was a greasy climb, and provided there were tidy sums to be made from the disorder of others. Certainly there are precious few glimpses of the world beyond. When images appear on TV of the Berlin Wall being gouged down with sledgehammers, the soldiers ask idly whether Berlin is in the East or the West. This comically inward gaze is a great and troubling subject, and its ramifications have stretched further, since the movie was made, than Gregor Jordan could have dreamed. He should have taken Elwood and his pals to Berlin itself, to the belly of the beast; or waited awhile and caught up with them in Baghdad.

The first scene in "The Magdalene Sisters" is the best. At a wedding reception in Ireland, in 1964, a Roman Catholic priest, perspiring with brio, throws his soul into a rendition of "Green Grows the Lily-O." Even here, are we meant to detect something untoward in the strainings of his rapture? Around him, the party swaggers on. A boy makes eyes at a girl, lures her upstairs, and has his wicked way. Creased and ruddy with shame, she comes downstairs and reports what has happened. Slowly, like a Chinese whisper, drowned by the gusting music, and noted by the sharp glances of the camera, the news of her undoing is passed among the guests, until it arrives in the ear of a priest. Within a couple of minutes, the girl has slipped from victim to temptress—the originator of the sin.

She is called Margaret (Anne-Marie Duff), and the rapist was her own cousin. Her parents, unmoved by her plight, dispatch her to a Magdalene Asylum. The Asylums were an Irish institution for wayward females, run by the Sisters of Mercy. The film's director, Peter Mullan, concentrates on a trio of girls who meet at a particular, though fictional, asylum. In addition to Margaret, there is Rose (Dorothy Duffy), whose illegitimate child is taken away at birth, and Bernadette (Nora-Jane Noone), the rudest and loveliest of the three. Her grievance cuts deepest, for her fate is decided by the looks that she darts at the boys who hang around her school playground. She is condemned not for those things she has done but for those that she might yet do.

The movie clicks back and forth between these three as they grind—scrubbing, whispering, and weeping—through their daily chores. They are not in prison, but they are fallen women in the eyes of the faithful, and they can be released only on the say of their parents, most of whom want nothing to do with them. If the film has dangerously little to say about those parents, whose indifference (or congenital terror) was, you might argue, a deep fault in itself, that is because Mullan bends all his considerable energy to a lashing of the Catholic Church. This is clear from our first view of Sister Bridget (Geraldine McEwan), the head of the asylum, whose finger, encased in a rubber thimble, is seen in unflinching closeup, counting out her money. Look out! Witch!

Nobody does shrewishness better than McEwan, who turns Sister Bridget into a crooning, purse-lipped avenger. The question arises: can a film so convinced of its need to condemn avoid a similar hardening of the heart? There is something unpleasantly driven in the sight of the director himself appearing in the role of a drunken father, unbuckling his belt to whip an errant child. As with the drugs and runaway tanks of "Buffalo Soldiers," all the variations on cruelty in Mullan's film are said to be authentic, but, in both cases, the heavy compacting of true stories is not itself guaranteed to ring true, and, even if the asylum girls really were stripped naked and paraded in front of mocking nuns, why put them through the same indecent charade for the benefit of the camera? Thankfully, Mullan's young actresses survive this and other trials on the strength of their grace and good temper, although, as Bernadette shows, if naughtiness was enough to land you in the asylum, bloody-mindedness was what you needed to get out. On a historical point, the film's final credits inform us that the Middle Ages lasted in Ireland until 1996—or, rather, that the last Magdalene Asylum closed in that year, which comes to the same thing. ♦

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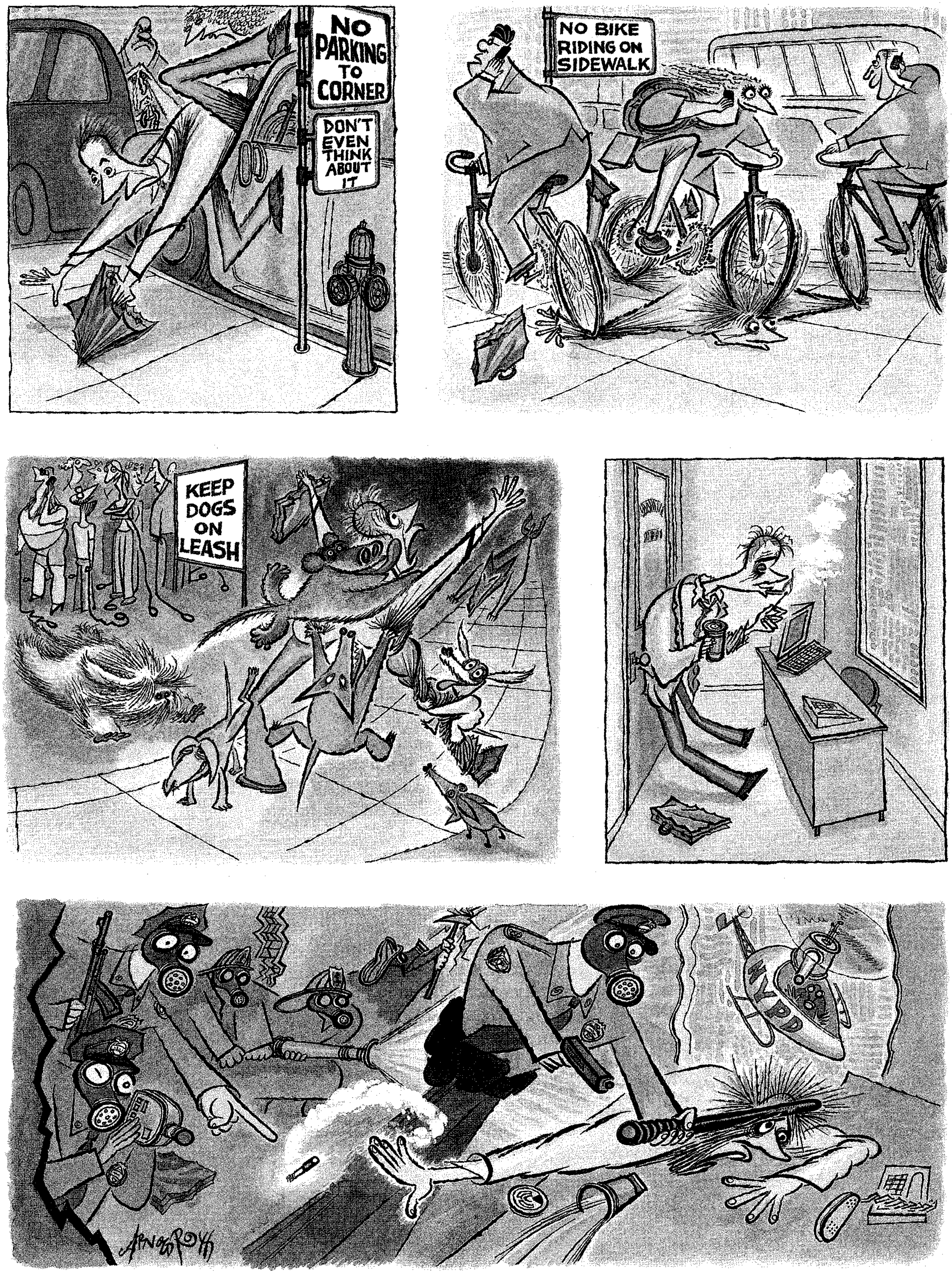
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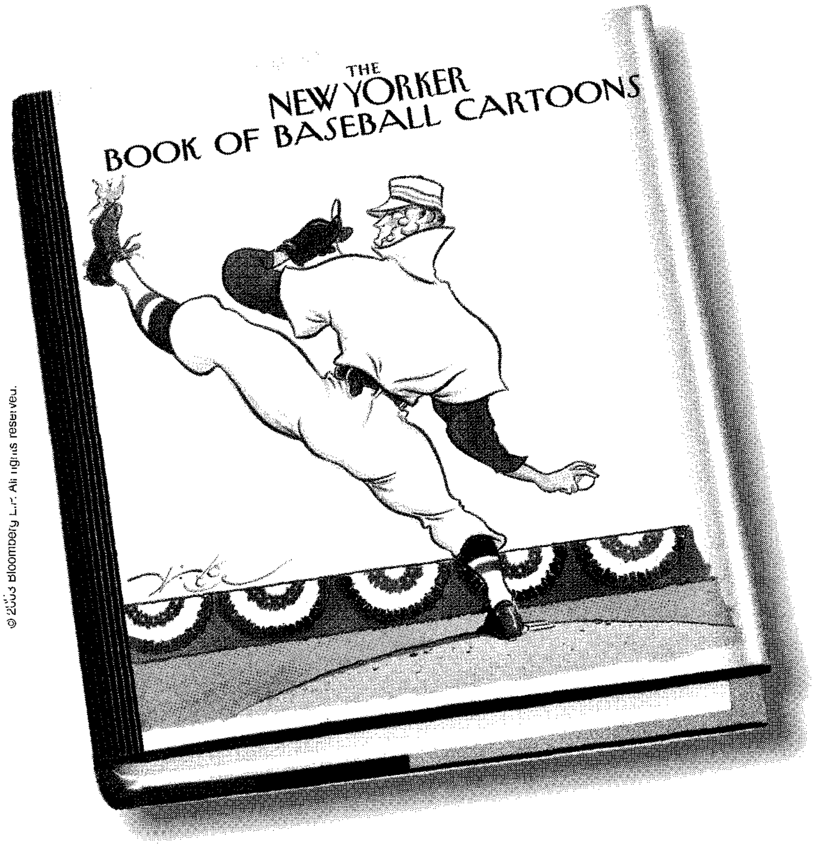
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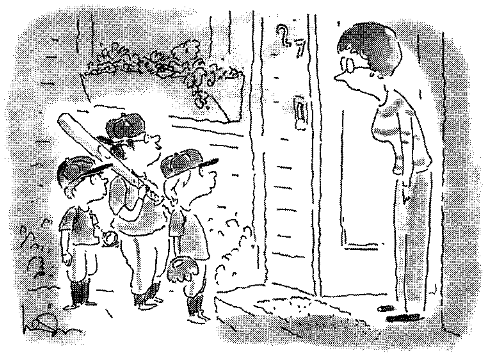

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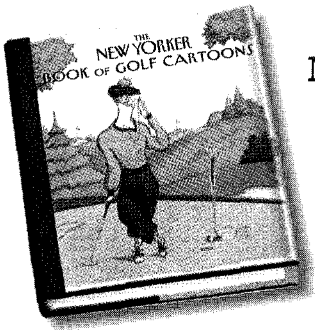
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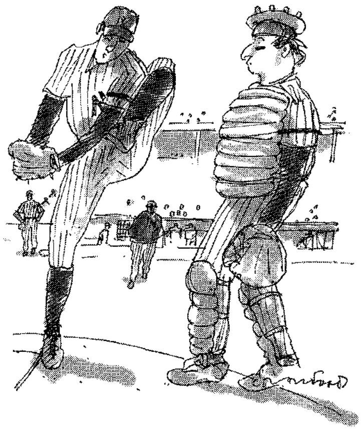

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